

Ark Volume 09

Act 1: Alive

Hwiooooo!

A snowstorm raged in a dark place. The look of snow inspires a warm feeling. But it actually felt like sharp knives were digging into the flesh like a knife. The ice debris didn't stop and just continued piling up. Zero sight.....in the hopeless darkness the only thing visible was snow and ice. It was an extreme environment difficult for most lifeforms to exist, a landscape of snowy mountains with no name. Surprisingly, a person could be seen in the middle of these snowy mountains. Snow piled on the thick cloak wrapped around the person. The person who tried to take a step forward in the thick snow before falling was.....Ark.

'Where on earth is this?'

Ark desperately looked around for a path. But all he could see was scattered ice.

".....Is this really the right place?'

That was the question that popped into his head. He didn't know how many days he wandered the mountain. The snow seemed like an endless field that had him in its scary clutches. No, the snowfield seemed like the hands of a devil. Thanks to the tremendous snowstorm, he couldn't even see beyond his nose. And since the snowstorm continued for many days, the terrain of the mountain seemed to change every hour. Even his footprints would disappear without a trace after a few minutes. After a short time he wasn't even able to distinguish what direction he came from.

'Can I really get out of here alive?'

Frankly, the fact that he even lived until now was a miracle. Up here, he had almost died many times because of an accident. But now he had reached the limit. The snowstorm was just a snowstorm, but the thing that annoyed Ark was the cold! The cold was so murderous that the expression 'it was digging into the inside of his bone' was insufficient.

'I'm really going to freeze to death like this.'

"Ooooooh.....M-master. I-I can't stand it anymore."

The suffering voice of Dedric was suddenly heard. In fact, Dedric was even more desperate than Ark. Due to the nature of a warm-blooded animal whether they were big or small, Dedric lost body heat more easily. Even though some of Deimos' joints

froze and he had difficulty moving, Dedric was the one truly suffering. Although Ark put him inside his coat, Ark's body temperature was also cold so it wasn't useful in helping Dedric. Snake was also as stiff as a wooden log.

"Endure just a little bit more. If we avoid the snowstorm then I can boil purified water."

"Huk, more water.....I won't drink anymore. Drinking water makes me more hungry....."

Dedric was brought to tears just like a child. Then, he heard the wind as a piece of ice entered his collar and froze him even more. The cold winds slammed into him for a moment before a red flashing message appeared.

-Due to the cold your temperature has fallen by 10%!

If your body temperature falls below 50% then various stats will rapidly decrease.

Dedric's eyes started to become dim.

"Eh.....Master.....Somehow it suddenly became warm.....hehehe.....But I'm sleepy....."

"You idiot, wake up! If you fall asleep then you'll die!"

"Die? Ah.....I don't know.....I just want to sleep.....sleep.....let me sleep.....huh?"

"I said no!"

Ark yelled while striking Dedric's face. He struck him until the frozen face swelled up. However, it caused an impression as Dedric muttered.

"Hitting is good.....please continue....."

Clack clack clack.....Clack clack clack clack.....

All of a sudden Dedric fell onto the snowfield. Ark flinched and looked back to see that Dedric's eyes had become blurred, causing him to fall. Even Deimos had reached his limit.

"Deimos, y-you.....no! You're not supposed to die here!"

Ark hurriedly took out a pot and put something in there. He could raise the body temperature of his summons by making them drink boiled purified water from the

snow. He honestly didn't know how long it would last. However, Ark had frozen limbs which didn't move the way he wanted it to.

'God dammit.....I shouldn't have blindly entered!'

Ark flared up as he remembered the circumstances from a few days ago. It seemed to be a scene in a documentary titled 'History of distress in the snowy mountains.' Ark was unexpectedly placed in this situation a few days ago. After killing huge monsters to pass the red wilderness, what welcomed Ark wasn't the legacy of a genius alchemist.....It was the great outdoors which inspired a lot of fear.

"Amazing!"

He naturally exclaimed. A short time after he stepped foot through the door drawn on the picture..... The light spread out in front of him until it became the endless snowfields. Ark never imagined that the different dimension would be a such a landscape and was stunned. However, Ark's mind was soon taken away from the majestic scenery. The place that Ark arrived was not just the snowfield. As he approached the edge of a snowfield, a wonderful scenery unfolded. Clouds were stretching out underneath his feet. The peak of the mountain rose through the clouds. The peak was covered with snow and ice.....it felt like he was on top of the Himalayas which he saw on TV. After Ark stared blankly down, a message window popped up.

'The Lost World= Seutandal' has been found.

New World contains a numerous secret histories, and you've found the hidden 'Lost World=Seutandal' thanks to your boundless curiosity.

During your adventures, you have discovered knowledge about Seutandal from a history book. According to the knowledge acquired from the history books, New World consists of multiple structures. The commonly known Spirit World or Middle earth aren't different worlds but they all originate from the same place- New World might be the main stage but it is only one part. In ancient times there was evidence of free exchanges between the different dimensions and Middle earth. But at some

point they became completely separate worlds.

It caused rampant speculation in a number of scholars but the reason has not been identified.

And today it is referred to as the 5 wonders of New World. In today's New World, the number of people who have travelled to different dimensions are very low.

<Experience +50,000, Fame +1,000.

You have entered a different dimension and earned the title of 'Great Adventurer.'

The top 100 adventurers who have entered a different dimension will receive a special title depending on their rankings. Currently Ark-nim has earned the eighth place S-class designation 'Great Adventurer.'

Now you are an expert and can travel around on your adventures more effectively. In addition, on you adventure you will get the chance to learn a wide variety of useful skills regardless of the profession.

<Your sense of direction improves and your movement speed out of battle rises by 10%. When you rest, you've also mastered a method to recover health more effectively and your mana regeneration increases by 10%. When you consume food, a 10% bonus will be applied to your satiety>

* As a title bonus all stats will increase by 5.

*Fame increases by 500

* The skills 'Explorer's Knowledge' and 'Camping' is acquired.

Explorer's Knowledge (Special, Beginner, Passive): If an advanced adventurer explores a new area and doesn't pass on the knowledge then it is meaningless. An adventurer can listen or watch that knowledge in order to improve their skills. It would be useful when exploring a new area.

<If you discover new areas and dungeons, or relics with historical value are found then it is possible to acquire a bonus skill point. The acquire skill point can be used to make any skill grow. However, the bonus skill point depends on the rarity of the

information>

('The Lost World= Seutandal: Skill Point +50)

Camping (Beginner, Passive): Even though an adventurer is accustomed to the hardships of the world, sometimes it is necessary to have a comfortable seating area. As an adventurer, you are able to make a campsite and rest anywhere. However, a tent and coal and fuel to light a campfire is necessary.

<Health and mana regeneration increases by 50% when resting. The probability of a monster attacking decreases by 50%. A monster also can't regenerate within 100 metres of the campsite>

'What the? The Great Adventurer?'

Ark's eyes widened. He never imagined the fame and experience he would receive once he stepped foot into a different dimension. However the more surprising thing was that he received a S-class title, the Great Adventurer! There were millions of users currently in New World! The bonus was only given to the first 100 people to step foot in a different dimension. Even if he knew that information in advance, he never would've expected to be one of them. But he didn't just barely enter the first 100 ranking, he was eighth place! The astronomical bonus from the competition was staggering. Ark had also envied the Camping skill that the merchant Sid used earlier. But the 'Explorer's Knowledge' skill which gave bonus skill points was what really caught Ark's eyes. It wasn't necessary to explain but in New World.....no, in all online games skills carried an absolute important. But a skill couldn't exert any power if the rate was low, even if the skill was high ranking.

The most basic 'Sword Mastery' or 'Defense' was also like this. No matter how good the sword or armour, without the relevant skills then the performance of the item would only be at 80%. In the beginning, they wouldn't be able to handle the armour or sword so a 20% penalty would be applied. The penalty will disappear once the skill became intermediate and when it became advanced then bonus damage would be applied. Ark's Sword-Hand combat had reached the advanced level so he gained a bonus 40% attack damage. Without that skill, there would be an attack difference of 60%. Of course, looking at the numbers was easy. But he could really tell the effect of a 1 point difference when the sword strikes. Because of that, every user paid attention to skills. But the problem of raising the skill was not insignificant. Every time the skill increased a level, the rate would slow down until it required two times the points to reach the next level.

‘Well, even if I died while using it, the skill would still go up.....’

It applied to most simple skills. With full mana he could use Blade Storm three or four times. In addition, skill points didn’t always apply to some racial special skills. If he just blindly hit a scarecrow then his combat related skill would not continuously rise. If he used the skill many times in a life and death battle then sometimes he would obtain enlightenment.

“But giving free skill points?”

Ark quickly opened the skill information window with an excited expression.

-Passive skills

M Sword-Hand Combat (Advanced: 425/500) A 40% increase in overall combat power when Sword-Hand combat is used.

m Archery (Beginner: 58/100) No penalty when you use the bow.

* Tactics: Intermediate: 159/300) There is an attack and defense bonus if the morale of your troops increases.

M Survival cooking (Advanced: 432/500) Unidentified food and medley dishes are produced.

m Indomitable Will (Intermediate: 168/300) When in a critical condition Attack Power, Critical Hit Chance, and recovery rate is increased.

m Indomitable Body (Intermediate: 161/300), When in critical condition, Defense, Critical Hit Evasion, and Recovery rate is increased.

m Foraging (Advanced: 379/500) You can smell food ingredients in nature.

m Ingredient Identification (Intermediate: 306/500) You can check in advance the effectiveness of the ingredients.

*Riding (Beginner: 3/100) You can handle a horse more skillfully.

m Counter-attack (Intermediate: 230/300) Additional damage applied if you successfully attack after the enemy’s attack.

m Parry (Intermediate: 212/300) Blocking using your weapon will cut the enemy’s damage in half.

m Laundry (Beginner: 58/100) Washing leather and armour will raise defense for a

certain period of time.

m Weapon Destruction (Beginner: 20/100) The enemy's weapon and armour is attacked directly and the durability decreased.

m Camping (Beginner: 0/100) Pitch a tent and light a fire at your campsite.

m Courage (Beginner: 15/100) You become insensitive to the fear.

-Active skills

m Nursing (Advanced: 398/500) Give hope to patients and increase their courage and energy. Mana consumption: 10

m Spirit of the Cat (Advanced: 374/500) Seal the movements of mice and small animals and decrease their attack, defense and morale. Mana consumption: 120

m Eyes of the Cat (Advanced: 321/500) Identify the weaknesses of an enemy using sharp eyes. Mana consumption: 50

m Magic Restoration (Advanced: 393/500) Restore an item to its original form. Mana consumption: 10

m Discerning Eye (Intermediate: 168/300) Intermediate protection of unconfirmed items are released. Mana consumption: 30

m Intimidation (Intermediate: 126/300) Insult the opponent and decrease their morale. Mana consumption: 30

M Sprint (Beginner: 69/100) For a short period of time, your movement speed will increase explosively.

m Blade maintenance (Beginner: 58/100) Increases the attack power of your weapon for a short period of time. Mana consumption: 20

Profession-exclusive skills

M Dark Blade (Intermediate: 215/300) Assimilate your sword with the darkness and strike a blow. Mana consumption: 100

m Blade storm (Beginner: 67/100) The sword will break into smaller shards and tear the opponent apart. Mana consumption: 400

M Dark Dance (Intermediate: 136/300) Your movements flow through the darkness to avoid the enemy's attack. Mana consumption: 300

m Summon Demon (Intermediate: 125/300) When summoning your pets, the mana

consumption is decreased. Spiritual Power consumption: 100

-Special skills

Slime's Time: You can summon slimes or invalidate all physical attacks by covering your body with slime. Adventurer's Knowledge: Obtain bonus skill points every time you encounter a new area.

Cartography: Create a map automatically when exploring dungeons.

Purification Restoration (Set, Nursing + Magic Restoration): Release a curse from an item.

Adrenaline (Set, Indomitable Will + Body): Dramatically improves reaction rate when in a critical condition.

Riposte (Chain, Parry + Counter Attack): Push the enemy back when counter attacking.

Dark Strike (Chain, Dark Dance + Dark Blade): Additional damage dealt to the enemy when continuously attacking in the darkness.

Double Critical Chance (Additional effect, Eyes of the Cat): Deal extra damage to defenceless enemies.

Line Designation (Additional effect, Eyes of the Cat) Determine the probability of an enemy attacking a certain way.

Heart of a Caregiver: (Additional effect, Nursing): A blessing effect is added to Nursing.

Great sacrifice (Addition effect, Nursing): Using potions, a recovery effect is applied to your allies.

Medley (Additional effect, Survival Cooking): Mix two or more dishes to produce other types of dishes.

* Available skill points: 50

'I've really learned a lot in the meantime.'

He could clearly see the results of his efforts just by looking at the skills list.

'Since there's time I'll organize my skill information window now.'

Ark needed to maintain his skills list. This is because of some information he heard from Shambala a while ago. When Ark talked about his skills and how Sword-Hand combat rose, Shambala immediately said.

“Passive skills that are assigned as a major skill will have the growth rate slowed down.”

“Major?”

Ark asked in confusion while Shambala became astounded.

“What the? Don’t tell me your registered your basic attacks as a major skill?”

“What’s that?”

“You’re either brave or ignorant.....you said your Sword-Hand combat was advanced? That is a surprise. Listen well you ignorant fellow. When the information window opens with the list of specific skills, isn’t there an option for specialized training at the top? Skills can be registered as major, minor or inactive.”

“So what’s the difference?”

“Skills registered as major will have a 120% growth applied. Minor skills will be 80% while inactive skills don’t grow at all. When you use the specialized training window then you can register all the skills.”

Shambala gave a brief description. He could register up to 5 major skills and 20 minor ones. Inactive skills were unlimited.....the number of skills that could be grown was fixed. Ark hesitated after he heard the information. Except for the racial special skill which Ark wasn’t growing, he had 27 skills. Except for 5 skills, a penalty was applied to the others which was why they didn’t grow as fast.

‘The growth rate of Sword-Hand combat and Blade Storm can easily increase, so once I collect enough points then I can make it inactive. Since the selection is so wide, I should register skills that would quickly grow as a major skill.’

Ark commonly used Sword-Hand combat, Survival Cooking, Dark Blade, Dark Dance, Sprint so he registered them as major while the rest were minor. He didn’t use a skill like riding while the special skills like tactics was registered as inactive. And he kept the newly acquired skill points for the time being. ‘M’ indicated major while ‘m’ indicated the minor skills.

‘I can’t just blindly use the skill points.’

Ark completed the arrangement and closed the information window with a satisfied look. Adventurer's knowledge, campinghe got better than expected skills. Furthermore, he gained an addition 50,000 experience and rose one level. He was now level 190! It was now possible to use Gwisal's sword. As soon as he entered a new dimension, the atmosphere really seemed relaxing. Ark wasn't the only one having fun.

"Hahaha, this is great! Master, look at this!"

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack!

Dedric and Deimos jumped crazily around the snowfield like a dog. Snake was the same as well. It poked its tail into the snow and quickly withdrew it at the strange feeling. But after a brief moment it got used to it and Snake joined the others summons rolling around in the snow. Ark watched with pleasure as his pets had a little fun.

'When was the last time it snowed.....'

In the present, global warming had been accelerated by severe air pollution. So there weren't much chances for snow in Seoul. Even since he was born, this was the first time that Ark had seen snow. Ark didn't feel the need to rush as he enjoyed the beautiful scenery. He was wearing a heart-warming smile when he was suddenly smacked on the back of the head by a snowball. Dedric who was in the form of a small boy made a stupid face and gathered more snowballs.

"Huhuhu, Master. Bring it on!"

"What's this? You really want to try me?"

Before he finished his words another snowball had already hit the back of his head. Deimos was behind him throwing snowballs as well.

"Ha, you guys.....you really want to do this?"

Ark laughed as he raised his eyes before gathering some snow. Then a fierce snow battle unfolded between Ark and his two pets.

"How dare you challenge me.....I'll turn you into snowmen, Dark Dance!"

"Eh? You're using a skill in a snowball fight?"

"There's no rules against using skills!"

Ark made some light movements and threw snowballs like an evening shower.

"Fufufu.....cold! He dared use such a method? Deimos, A-3 plan!"

Clack clack, clack clack clack!

As expected from the pets who received Ark's spartan training. Dedric immediately changed into a bat and bombarded him from the sky. And Deimos used his shield to deflect the snowballs. They used the things their Master taught them to turn him into a snowman.

"These children are so despicable....."

"Hehehe, whose summons are we? I learnt everything from Master. Die!"

"Fools. I won't go easy on you anymore!"

Ark started throwing snowballs that was as hard as a stone. While this battle originally called for a cannon, sometimes a missile should be used. Dedric rose slightly making it hit the ground behind him before throwing another barrage. So Ark and his summons enjoyed an hour of a bloody snowball battle.

"Keuak-!"

After being hit by the stone (?), Dedric fell onto the snowfield. Ark grasped the chance and ran up to him.

"Huhuhu, be prepared. Take this bat boy!"

"Ugh, it can't possibly be over! Deimos cover.....eh? Master, look."

Dedric looked to the side with surprised eyes.

"Look at what? Do you think I would fall for something so shallow?"

"It's different. Take a look."

"What? There is nothing."

"That's the problem. The door we came through disappeared."

"Eh? Come to think of it....."

Ark stopped his actions and looked around. Dedric's words were right. While he was distracted by the snowball fight, the dimensional door had disappeared. He immediately had a sinking feeling.

“The door isn’t maintained once open?”

He didn’t know anything about this place. There might be monsters here. He also didn’t know if there was a village in the area. He also didn’t know if there were any other gates back to middle earth. In such a situation there was no way to go back so anymore would be worried. However, Ark finally shook his head.

‘No. I don’t have to worry too much.’

If the gate from the cabin that connected to another dimension was a one-way passage, then clearly another gate would exist. And there have been 7 people who arrived here before Ark. Including Ark, that was 8 users on the continent. Didn’t that mean he could monopolize a lot of quests and items? In addition, the genius alchemist’s secret laboratory with a huge reward was hidden somewhere here. Even if he knew in advance that the gate would disappear, he wouldn’t have gone back. His one worry was that his bag had become full after travelling through the red wilderness.

‘But even if I returned, I still would’ve appeared in that small cabin.’

A considerable amount of time would be needed to reach a village from the red wilderness. Even if he organized his bag and crossed the red wilderness again, the situation would still be the same. Then wouldn’t it be quicker to look for a town here?

‘My choice won’t change even if the gate disappeared.’

Ark gave up on the gate.

“Anyway, this is not the time to be playing. Let’s go down the mountain and find a village before it is too late.”

“Understood. Master.”

So Ark began to lead them down the snowy mountains.

.....At that point, Ark never imagined the situation that would occur.

The first thing that confused Ark was the terrain. It seemed quite simple when looking down from the top but once he actually wandered down it was like a maze. The flat terrain with the steep slope would appear ordinary until a sharp crevasse would suddenly appear and block the way.

“Damn, this way is also blocked?”

Thanks to this he would often have to climb the mountain again. And since the mountain was covered in snow no matter where he looked, Ark began to lose his sense of distance. In a place like this the map didn't help at all. Since he came to a new dimension the map was updated. Since Ark only wandered the snowy mountains, the map just showed the approximate shape. The only thing he discovered from the map was the name of the mountains, which was called 'East Moon.'

"This is not good. Dedric, look at the terrain from above."

"U-understood."

Dedric trembled as he flew towards the sky. But this time Dedric's scouting didn't help. He couldn't determine the topography while flying over the snowy mountains. In addition the cold winds meant that Dedric couldn't stay in the sky for a long time.

"Waaaaah, my wings are frozen. I can't fly anymore."

'This might be a very dangerous situation.....'

Now anxiety showed on Ark's face. Food was also a problem. In the red wilderness the monsters were so strong that Ark was forced to eat food every time a battle finished. Of course, there were a rich amount of ingredients scattered around but since his bag space was scarce he didn't keep them.

'I can get ingredients in the new dimension so japtem is more important.'

Since he could always make food, Ark didn't worry about it that much. But the mountain was only covered in snow and ice. The common rabbit or deer wasn't seen at all. Since he had to fight the cold and climb the mountain, his weariness quickly grew while his satiety decreased.

'Damn, I never thought I would be worried about my meals. I can't find any monsters or wild beasts, let alone weeds to make food.'

Naturally his summons also ate live creatures. Because the ingredients were very limited, Ark sent Dedric and Deimos back to the Netherworld. No, he tried to send them back.

-The summon release command has failed (Area Restriction)

<In the current area summoning/releasing your summons from the Netherworld is restricted.

Upon the death of a pet, they will lose 10% of their total stats and it won't be possible to summon them anymore. Instead, your mana will not be consumed while your pets are summoned>

'What, what the?

It was a completely unexpected message. In fact, Ark hadn't worried about the lack in ingredients because he could just return Dedric and Deimos. With two less mouths, he could eat sparingly and survive for a few more days. But now this suddenly happened?

'Cancelling my summons is impossible? Furthermore, their stats will be decreased by 10% if they die?'

In the end, if they died they'll all died together while if they live then they'll all live together. In the worst case scenario, his satiety will fall below 50% and his stats would decrease until he eventually died. Ark who had used survival cooking to reach level 190 was now in the ridiculous situation of worrying about starvation. If he died then how many equipped items would drop? It was unlikely that he would find the items in the snowy mountains once it dropped. It was also evident that he wouldn't be able to sleep properly for a few days.

'We can last one day with the food left. If we reach a place where wild animals live before the food runs out then we'll be able to survive somehow.'

Ark hurriedly made his way down the mountain. However Ark still didn't know the real fear of the snowy mountains. The terrible situation occurred a few hours later.

Hwiiiing.....!

All of a sudden a snow storm occurred. The intense wind scattered a huge amount of snow. The terrain of the snowy mountains began to change every few minutes. To make matters worse, the foot of the mountain and any edges was covered in complete darkness.

One mountaineer said. The mountain has a different face during the day and night.....

It was like he said. Although the snowy mountains was covered in ice, he could endure it during the day. However, when it was covered in darkness the mountains literally turned into a mountain of death. The temperature suddenly dropped and everything froze. Thanks to the soaring gas costs, Ark didn't even turn on a boiler during winter in December. Thanks to that, he unintentionally developed a strong resistance to cold. But the temperature of Seoul in December couldn't even compare

to that of a snowstorm on the snowy mountains. Rather than simply feeling cold, he also felt pain. In addition, the coldness of New World directly connect to his brain causing him to feel a chill.

“W-what’s this nonsense…….”

It was the first time since he was born that he felt such an extreme cold.

“Waaaaaah, f-freezing……M-Master, I, I’m dying……!”

Clack clack clack clack!

Ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Dedric, Deimos and Snake also trembled as they stuck close to Ark. At the same time, a warning message repeatedly appeared in front of Ark.

-Due to the cold your temperature has fallen by 10%!

<For every 10% your body temperature falls, your attack speed and movement speed will decrease by 5% and your satiety will also decrease by 5%. If your body temperature drops below 50% health then you will lose 10 health every 50 seconds. In addition, your body temperature will fall even if you have 100% health.

Please pay attention to managing your temperature. Temperature can be increased using food>

‘Oh my God!’

His eyes really became gloomy once he read the message.

“Oh……M-Master……n-now what?”

Dedric shoved his nose into Ark’s mantle and looked at him with resentful eyes.

“Even with the cloak……my body is freezing……that’s right……you should’ve bought a coat when you went to the village……I told you!”

Winter had just recently came back to New World after 3 years. Thanks to that, in every village general store their thick coats sold like hotcakes. However, Ark didn’t want to waste money buying a coat that only gave cold resistance and no stats. He could withstand quite a bit of cold. And he would warm up when hunting. Ark’s stingy nature had strangled him this time.

'It is impossible to wander the mountain like this.'

Ark gave up on climbing down the mountain for the moment and looked for a place with protection from the wind. A steady area was needed to make a campsite. But he didn't have a tent or fuel to set up the campsite. The most Ark could do was share his mantle with his pets to share body warmth. A message window popped up after 1 hour.

-Your resistance to cold has risen by 0.1%.

-You have become in unison with your pets and Affection has risen by 1.

'This damnwe've been shaking like a dog for hours yet cold resistance only increase by 0.1%? Affection? Is this a joke?'

He cursed after seeing the message window.

'Hold on! Just hold on until it becomes daytime.'

However, he couldn't see even when it became daytime thanks to the snow.

'It's still better than night time. I have to find a way before it's too late.'

Ark made a very hot soup and began to wander the mountains again. When the snowstorm became strong again, he repeated his actions and hid again to avoid the cold. So 16 hours passed like that, which was two days in game time. Normally it would've taken four days to run out of food, but he used his ingredients making food every 30 minutes to maintain his body temperature.

'Now I can't even make any food. I have to maintain a minimum temperature.....'

Ark sighed while watching the blizzard which showed no signs of dying down.

'Wait? What if I don't need cook food to increase body temperature?'

Ark scraped the surrounding snow and put it into the pot. So far Ark hadn't used water in survival cooking. What would happen if he added water to boiling water? Once he thought about it he became excited that hot water could also be useful for this situation. He quickly tried using survival cooking with boiling water.

'As expected!'

-Survival cooking has created 'Purified water.'

It is possible to get pure distilled water after melting snow that isn't polluted. If you

use purified water when cooking with basic ingredients, it is possible to expect some increase in stats.

Once he drank the purified water his body temperature increased by 20%. It was also survival cooking!

‘The situation is still urgent since this is only a temporary solution.’

When eating food it wasn’t possible to eat the same food every 30 minutes. But now his body temperature fell by 20% every 30 minutes. It would be difficult to endure as more time passed.

‘And purified water does not increase satiety at all. I have to somehow find food to survive.’

In the darkness the cold fell even more and now he couldn’t afford to avoid the cold by hiding in crevices. The remaining ingredients would only feed Ark and his pets once. If he didn’t starve to death, he would freeze to death first.

‘I’m not ready to die here!’

Ark set out to find food in a blizzard.

‘There must be something even if it is a snowy mountain. If I can’t use my eyes to search.....yes, that’s it!’

“Magic Detection!”

Ark’s pupils shone with a blue light. When he used Magic Detection, light started shining in several places in the snow. The light was so small that it wouldn’t normally be seen in the daytime. But in the daytime it looked clear.

‘Something is there!’

Icecap’s decision (Magic Ingredient)

These crystals are rarely found in icecaps. As the cold storms blew for millions of years, the frozen fire eventually hardened to form these crystals.

Seolmocho (Magic Ingredient)

A mysterious herb that only grows on icecaps. The herb grows like moss on snow-covered rock so it is very difficult to find. It has a strong fever reducing effect and is often used in the treatment of several diseases.

"Damn, what is this?"

Ark frowned. Normally he would be able to find magic ingredients which meant money, but this was a life or death situation. A 1 copper food ingredient was more important than a 1 gold magic ingredient.

'But I'll collect it for the moment.'

Ark was still Ark. Even in these circumstances, he couldn't give up items that would make him money. Ark fought against the cold and scraped all the ingredients he could find within seconds. When he was rummaging around in the snow, his body temperature quickly lowered to the minimum amount. In this dangerous situation he was forced to use his remaining ingredients to make food. It was indeed the Last Supper.

"That's the last of our food. Do you understand? If we can't find any more food before our satiety falls then we're screwed."

Ark once again sighed and raised his body.

"You can't sleep! Pull it together!"

So after a few hours the situation became like this. It was a long time enduring the cold and hunger! Ark and his summons changed. Ark and Deimos still had their body temperature maintained at 60% but Dedric was more sensitive to the cold and only had 50% left. His health started to decrease and he began to rattle delirious words.

"I don't like.....sleepy....."

"If you go to sleep you'll die! If you die the stats you raised with so much difficulty will decrease! Is that a good thing? Think about it. The days where you struggled to raise your stats and the memories we've accumulated so far!"

"Memories.....memories of Master....."

Dedric recalled the past with hazy eyes.

The first meeting? As a hatred-bearing bat, he ignored Ark. When did he begin to talk? The awful food that was jammed into his mouth until he swallowed it. What about when he evolved? He was beaten to a pulp while claiming human rights. The vampire skills he learned? He was hit until he learned to control his vampirism. Looking back at the memories, a strange feeling rose in his chest.

".....I'd rather die."

Dedric muttered and turned his head angrily.

"Eh? What the, you! What's with that expression?"

"I don't know, I just realized once again how pitiful it is to be your pet."

"What the? This child, even though I was so worried about you....."

"Are you done?"

"I'm done. Did it help?"

He was starving and freezing because of his master. Dedric knew he would die anyway so he couldn't resist attacking Ark before he died.

"Dammit, yes. It is Master's fault I became like this. Okay, this is it. But I have to stop myself starving. There must be some wild animal that will give meat.....that fellow looks delicious. That thick body.....I wonder how delicious its blood will be? Eh, food?"

Dedric who had been looking around the snow suddenly gave an astonished expression. When he turned around, Ark's eyes also widened. A small object could be seen in the distance.

Dodododo. Running through the snowfield was a small animal whose nose twitched.....to his surprise it was a mouse who lived in the snow.

"Master!"

Ark and Dedric looked at each other. Then they looked at the mouse before shouting in unison.

"Meat!"

Ark, Dedric and Deimos dived towards the mouse. The surprised mouse tried to flee. Because the snow reached up to his thighs, he couldn't catch up with the nimble mouse. However, who was Ark? He was the veteran of catching mice, a hero with the title of Cat Knight!

"Don't miss! Spirit of the Cat!"

Nyahhhh-!

Ssik-!

At that moment, the shape of a cat appeared like a lion around Ark's head. And when his eyes flashed golden, the mouse immediately stiffened.

"Uhahaha, it was caught, it was caught!"

"Oh, Master it was wonderful. It was the most wonderful scene so far!"

When Ark caught the mouse Dedric immediately shouted while drooling.

"Hahaha, how is it? I'm Ark!"

A level 190 user caught a small mouse using a large roar. Such an unseemly thing was considered his best moment? Ark pulled out his sword and immediately struck the mouse. The mouse immediately had its leather and meat peeled off. Then he created a mouse soup that would restore 20% of his satiety. Even with the purified water raising the effects, Dedric, Deimos and Snake would only have 6~7% restored. It wasn't that much but Ark was grateful for now.

"Huhuhu, Master quickly.....boil it quickly."

"Okay men. Wait a minute."

Ark laughed as he took out the pot. Just as he was adding the purified water and mouse meat.

Woodeuk, woodeudeuk!

Suddenly he heard a cracking sound underneath his foot. Ark jumped before his face suddenly paled.

'Oh om god, t-this.....this design.....?'

A scene from a movie he saw a while ago suddenly popped into his head. It was a movie about the hardships of the people who wanted to conquer the Himalayas.

One of the most memorable things was the design. The crevasses at the glacier. The design had snow accumulating over the crevasses until it looked like a flat plain of hardened ice. At first glance it looked just like a field of snow, but once stepped on then the person would find themselves falling through. Many people were tricked by this design and died in the snowy mountains because of these crevasses.

‘Fortunately it hasn’t completely crumbled. If I move a little bit then I can escape.....’

Ark breathed carefully as he tried not to slip while moving one step. At that time, Deimos who had his joints frozen approached.

Ark shouted with fright.

“N-no! Deimos.....please stop!”

Clack clack clack?

Deimos tilted his head and stopped after taking a step. However, Deimos had already stepped on the design.

Wadeudeuk, Jjajjang!

‘Hell.....we’re screwed!’

Ark heard the sound of destruction in his ear. At the same time his foot slipped and he fell down the crevasse.

Act 2: Falling from a cliff and meeting an ironic fate

“Slime’s Time, NO1!”

Ark used the skill reflexively. The crevasse was a gap where the end couldn’t be seen. Thanks to the cold and low satiety, if he fell in this state then he would be torn apart. But Ark had a way of saving himself. Slime’s Time invalidated 100% of physical damage so he wouldn’t receive any falling damage! Ark’s body was covered with a yellow slime once he used the skill. In that state Ark struggled to reach Deimos. Since he couldn’t release the summon, he had no choice but to catch Deimos. And just as Ark grabbed Deimos, they approached the ground.

Tting! Tting! Tting!

Ark hit the ground and bumped around liked a water balloon. He bounced three or four times before properly landing on the ground.

“Huk huk huk, I’m alive……..!”

His entire body was soaked in sweat. He had fallen from a height of 100 metres before. But falling suddenly was different from calculating it in advance. At one point Ark really thought it was the end.

“What a stupid bag of bones!”

Dedric naturally starting telling Deimos off. But it was only for a short moment before he flinched and turned to Ark.

“Come to think of it, the mouse! What happened to the mouse meat?”

“The mouse meat……..”

Ark sighed and shook his head. A soulless expression spread over Dedric’s face. But afterwards Ark laughed and opened his hand.

“Of course I grabbed it tightly.”

“M-Master. You scared me. Sob……I was surprised.”

Dedric had been moved to tears. That guy……he was really starving. Ark had learned Survival Cooking. Thanks to that there had never been a time he made them starve, even if he had to forcefully feed them. Even if he beat them up, he would always feed them. In reality, Ark knew better than anyone the sorrow of missing meals and starving. That’s why he never used taking away food as a punishment.

“Huhuhu. Why are you so surprised?”

“Aing, I don’t know. Master is hateful. Quickly give me the soup.”

Dedric immediately dropped the charm after he was reassured.

Clack clack clack clack!

Deimos also visibly brightened as he approached. Even the undead could feel hunger. Ark took out his pot while his pets stared at him encouragingly. It was the precious food. Ark carefully created a dish using various spices and purified water. Then with a flash, the dish was completed in the pot.

The Survival Cooking dish 'the best Mouse Meat Soup' has been completed!

Your sincerity was enough to infuse this dish with your devotion. The heart which considers the health of the person eating it is the most important virtue for a chef. Because you added the purified water and spices with sincerity, the Mouse Meat Soup has been reborn as an a la carte dish.

<Agility +2, Satiety +20%>

<A la carte bonus: Agility +2, Health +400, Satiety +20%>

"Ooooooooooh!"

Ark and his pets simultaneously exclaimed. He knew that Nursing would have special effects if he was sincere. But he never knew that could be applied to Survival Cooking. Since he always had abundant ingredients, there was no need to take care when cooking so he never discovered it.

'But it is only one dish that can be eaten together. And the number of dishes we can eat together is limited to 10. If I cooked 10 of the a la carte dishes then a lot of stats would be applied!'

If he hadn't been placed in this situation then he would've never discovered the information. It was information that could be used even when he had abundant ingredients. Ark was also grateful that his satiety increased.

"The leg is mine! Touch it and die!"

"Ack, so mean! Then give me the left hind leg!"

Clack clack clack, ssak ssak ssak!

Ark and his summons childishly rushed to obtain as much meat as possible. After eating their satiety and body temperature increased by 10%. But now their hunger became even more intense. And they became gloomy as they were faced with the reality.

"Now we have to find something again before our satiety decreases....."

Ark looked around with concern. The sky high ice walls blocked the wind so luckily the chill was not that severe. However, the situation was still not good. Once again food.....he had to find food in the crevasse underneath the snowy mountains. And he had to navigate the tangled maze of crevasses. Rock climbing and climbing an ice wall was entirely different.

“Master, are we going to starve here and die?”

Dedric murmured in a gloomy voice.

“.....Let’s look for a way while we still have physical strength.”

Honestly, he thought there was no more possible ways. But it wasn’t possible to just sit down and wait. Ark and his summons walked along the crevasses for the moment.

Kkururuk.

How far did they walk? After appeasing their stomachs, once again the sound of hunger was heard. When he checked, their satiety had reached 50%.

‘Damn, we only reached this far.....’

Ark breathed out a sigh.

Ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak?

Ark noticed as Snake suddenly raised its head. Then it crawled down from his waist and squeezed between an ice gorge.

“Eh? Snake, where are you going?”

Ark followed behind it with a befuddled look. He squeezed through the narrow opening and an information window suddenly appeared.

Snowy Mountain’s hidden cave.

East Moon is the snowy mountain covered in ice. You’ve found a cave hidden in a crevasse underneath East Moon. After hundreds or thousands of years of ice and rock, a beautiful cave has been produced holding an ancient mystery. Surprisingly, the vine plants not native to the snowy mountain also grows in this cave. But an eerie animal smell carried by the cold air can be scented from the cave. It seems that this is not a comfortable retreat so you should stay alert.

<Explorer’s Knowledge:Hidden dungeon bonus (Skill Points: 10)>

-You have found an undiscovered dungeon.

As a new discover, you can gain an additional 2,000 experience and 130 Fame if you

register in the Hall of Fame.

Would you like to register?

‘A hidden dungeon!’

Ark’s eyes shone brightly. Although there were some ominous words in the information window, Ark just welcomed the news of a dungeon. A dungeon that no one had discovered yet! Who knows what treasures would be hidden here? In addition, the entrance of the dungeon was covered in entangled plants. In other words, it was growing plants. Ark who desperately needed ingredients had found an oasis in a desert.

‘I also got addition skill points!’

Ark was in such a good mood that he felt like screaming.

“Oh, is this place warmer than the crevasse?”

Clack clack clack clack!

Dedric muttered and his and Deimos’ face started to look alive again. Because the crevasse and cave blocked off the wind, it felt like they were in an igloo. Of course, the ice cave was still cold but it couldn’t compare to the temperatures outside. Its effect showed immediately. The speed at which their body temperature was falling started to slow down.

‘But satiety is still in a dangerous state. I have to seek food first. Since the entrance is cool, I might be able to find some suitable herbs or berries.’

As expected there were several small fruits stuck to the vines.

‘That’s it. If I gather everything from the cave then I don’t have to worry about starving and dying for the moment. Once I find an exit then I’ll be able to descend the mountain!’

Ark collected the fruit and looked at his waist.

“Okay, Snake. You can hold this for the moment.....eh?”

His waist was empty. Ark realised that Snake had yet to come back.

“Dedric, Deimos, where is Snake?”

“Snake? I don’t know. Wasn’t it just here before?”

Clack clack clack?

Dedric and Deimos just shook their heads. Ark had an uneasy feeling. Snake had moved without any commands and found the cave. Then it should have returned to Ark as soon as he entered the cave. But instead of coming back, it just disappeared without saying a word. Snake only had 50 health. Because Snake was normally attached to his waist, he never had to worry about it but if Snake ran into a monster then it would die instantly with one shot! Of course, monsters that attacks a snake were rare but he couldn’t summon his pets here. If Snake died then he wouldn’t be able to use one bag.

“Snake! Where are you?”

Ark cried out as he plunged into the cave.

Ssak? Ssak ssak.....!

He had run 100 metres. Then he heard Snake’s voice from the cave walls. He looked up to see that Snake was hanging over several branches. Ark let out a sigh of relief.

“Phew.....what are you doing in this place by yourself? You disappeared all of a sudden.”

It was at that time. Some black shadows quickly emerged from a side passage. Ark jumped and stepped back. But the shadows running through the darkness didn’t even head towards Ark. They didn’t grasp the situation and aimed straight for Snake! Ark shouted in an urgent voice.

“Huk, Snake! Hold still and don’t move! Slide!”

Ark slid along the floor and made a side kick.

Thanks to the power of the kick, the monster fell over backwards. The shadow that rushed towards Snake was a weasel like monster. While the monsters was frozen, Snake tumbled down and wrapped around Ark’s waist.

“Eyes of the Cat!”

Ark used the skill to check the monster’s information. Once he saw the name he understood why they attacked Snake first, unlike other monsters. The name of the monster was the Ice Mongoose. The mongoose was famous for eating snakes. Although Snake was raised by Ark among humans, it instinctively knew that the

mongoose was its natural enemy. When the mongooses appeared, Snake buried its face in Ark's chest and trembled. In such a situation, Snake wasn't the only one that would feel fear. Thinking of the mongoose as the cute animal that was raised in a zoo was a big mistake. Its size was 5 metres tall! It was to the extent that it almost reached the ceiling of the cave. It also had sharpened fangs and fearsome claws that could knock out a polar bear.

'Level 250.....'

Ark was currently level 200. With his dark attribute bonus, he was level 240. It was a similar level. But because of his body temperature and satiety, Ark had a significant penalty applied to his stats and attack speed. Unless it was one, he couldn't guarantee the odds against several of them. But.....

"Meat!"

Ark grinned widely and shouted. And it was followed by Dedric's loud cheers.

"Big meat! It is heaps bigger than the mouse!"

The mongoose flinched and revealed its fangs as they approached.

"Jackpot. Master! Let's catch it and eat it quickly! There's four of them, enough for each of us!"

Good. I'll use some one of them to make a soup while the rest will be a roast!"

Clack clack clack clack!

Ark and his summons drooled as they ran forward. Thanks to their hunger, Ark and his summons only saw the level 250 monster as meat.

"Now, shall I do a performance test?"

Ark removed something from his bag. It shone with a peculiar light. It was Gwisal's sword that he received from Isabel! He was level 190 when he came to the different dimension but he hadn't had a chance to use it yet. The legendary sword that was said to have cut thousands of demons shone with an eerie light.

Kyaaaaak!

When the distance was narrowed, the mongoose immediately swung its sharp claws. Ark angled the sword to block before attacking. And he ended up cutting from the top to the bottom. As it cut across the mongoose's body, Ark was covered in goose bumps.

‘W-what the, this feeling is?’

Thanks to the nice strike, the mongoose immediately lost 15% of its health. It did approximately 300 damage considering that it was a level 250 monster! If it was Lancel’s Sword then it would normally be a critical hit. But he wasn’t astounded at the attack power. It was a rare sword so he expected that much. It was the ‘cutting taste’ that Ark found unexpected.

Saaaaak, the feeling of the two-handed sword cutting through the leather was incredible! The very real impression of cutting through the skin with a razor was delivered to his fingertips. It was impossible not to feel good at the sensation of cutting meat, but Ark sensed that Gwisal’s sword was not that simple. Words could not express the feeling of freshness! It was as if all the cells of the body was peeled along with the sword.

‘This is a rare sword.....!’

A slow smile spread on Ark’s face as he enjoyed the sword. Ark quickly became obsessed with the magic of Gwisal’s sword.

‘Now I understand why people strangle themselves trying to get a rare sword. After using this sword, a magic sword will feel like I’m swinging a club.’

The sword shone after it attacked the mongoose. Ark then rotated his body like a spin top and swung his sword.

Chiing!

Lancel’s Sword made a cracking sound when it delivered a critical hit but Gwisal’s sword just vibrated. At the same time the hot, pleasant sensation was felt through his fingertips!

‘This feeling.....is crazy.’

Ark swung his sword like a man possessed at the mongoose. Of course, even Gwisal’s sword had a weakness. Since it was a two-handed sword, the attack speed was slower. And since the sword was so big, it was hard to achieve the centre of gravity to do a kick after swinging it. In addition, due to the nature of a two-handed sword, it was difficult to obtain the accuracy needed for a critical hit. But despite its shortcomings, it was several times stronger than Lancel’s sword.

Saaaaak, chiing!

Every sparkle of the sword decreased the mongoose's health. Dedric and Deimos also felt no anxiety and were facing the mongoose leisurely.

"Hehehe, do these guys just look strong?"

Dedric giggled as he flew around the cave.

"Do you think you can catch me using such movements?"

Clack clack clack clack!

Deimos also blocked the mongoose's attack using his shield and sometimes even counter-attacked. These changes were because of his pet's experience. After Ark entered Nagaran, a lot of their opponents were assassins. And the user, not to mention the NPC humanoid assassins had fairly high intelligence. Of course their strategies and attack patterns were very complicated. Ark and his summons had been dealing with such enemies for the past month. Since they were now dealing with normal monsters, their attack patterns were easily seen through. Ark also faced a large degree of difficulty in the red wilderness. Moreover, Ark and his pets' goal was to eat the mongoose meat.

"Dedric, use the darkness to attack the mongoose from the rear! Deimos, defensive stance on the side!"

"Yes!"

After the command, the summons couldn't even be compared to before. As soon as he finished, Dedric crashed into the mongoose from behind who flinched and ran forward. The mongoose was forced to run towards Ark thanks to Deimos using his shield to block the side. A great opportunity! Ark used Dark Dance to strike two concentrated attacks. The mongoose who already had its health lowered with split in half.

'That's it, now for the two remaining, but with this much then it will be an easy victory!'

"A-2 plan! It's a concentrated attack!"

Ark and his summons cornered the remaining mongooses with a wave attack. And after just a few moments, the mongooses fell when Gwisal's sword cut their throats.

"That's it. Now it is time to eat!"

Dedric drooled as he flew towards the body of a mongoose. Suddenly a red shape ran into the cave at an incredible pace. Deimos saw it first and stood in front of Dedric holding his shield. A massive ringing sound shook the cave while Deimos was thrown back. Ark was surprised and flinched as he retreated.

Grrrrrrr!

A mongoose was walking in front of him. But it wasn't a conventional mongoose. This mongoose was bigger than the others and covered with red hair! When he checked it was level 300. 50 levels higher than the other mongooses.

'This guy is a special monster!'

Ark's eyes lit up. He had met such monsters several times before this. The body of the monster was usually bigger than the others and it would have a different clothing or skin colour. Special monsters such as this would make a light gleam in a monster hunter's eyes. Since the level and stats were so high and their bodies so big, it wasn't easy to catch them. But they had a high probability of dropping deluxe items.

'Meeting a special monster in a place like this.....!'

Ark swallowed his saliva and stared at the body of the red mongoose.

"That face and those bones.....you would look good roasted whole!"

Dedric said as he rushed towards it from the darkness. At that moment red flames emerged as the mongoose opened its mouth.

"Wah! F-fire! H-hot!"

Dedric screamed and flapped his tail as it was set on fire.

'T-this.....!'

Dedric said had a lot of health so it wasn't a big problem. But Deimos couldn't withstand the mongoose's attack with his shield. Once engulfed in flames then he would instantly die. He wouldn't be able to summon Deimos even after 24 hours had passed. However, the larger problem was that Ark would receive damage when Deimos died. Deimos had a steady growth and his current health was 1,800. 50% of that was 900 damage. The damage was 30% of Ark's health which would be catastrophic. Ark wrapped his mantle around him and jumped into the fire. It was the 50% fire resistant Veil of Fire! Ark shouted and stuck Gwisal's sword into the mouth of the mongoose who was radiating flames.

-You have dealt a critical hit!

Chiing, the mongoose wobbled and retreated.

"Deimos, withdraw to the back."

Clack clack clack! Clack clack clack clack! Deimos retreated from the flames after Ark came in and saved him.

'This cave is too narrow. If he uses the same fire attack then Dedric and Deimos won't have room to dodge. The attacks will be fatal to my pets since they don't have any fire resistance.'

Moreover, Dedric and Deimos had already lost 15% of their health. If they were hit by the flames one more time than they would quickly fall into a critical condition. And if one of them died then Ark would receive extra damage from the forced recall.

"Dedric, Deimos, you guys retreat far away."

"What? Master.....you're going to fight along?"

Dedric had been rubbing his tail on the ice.

"You guys will be no help anyway."

"But Master....."

Dedric looked at him with restless eyes but left. In this situation Ark couldn't afford to relax. They had taken down four mongooses relatively easy. He hadn't expected any other monsters to come out immediately so he hadn't paid attention to his health. Therefore his current health was only 30%. Ark grabbed his sword bag tightly.

'If its 1-on-1 then the odds are in my favour!'

Kkuaaaa!

At that time, the mongoose who had waited for an opportunity rushed towards him. Ark swung his sword in a circular motion. Using the circular motion, he counterattacked on its chest.

"Riposte!"

-Tung, a dull ringing sound was heard as the mongoose retreated. Ark continuously attacked until he eventually took a break and grasped his sword bag.

‘My health isn’t enough. I have to pay more attention to defense than attack.’

Gwisal’s sword had a slow attack speed. That means there was a lot of gaps in his attack.

‘I can fight at close range with Lancel’s sword and I can also switch back and forth between taekwondo. But Gwisal’s character is completely different. Since it uses both hands, the attack range is narrow and the response time to an enemy’s counter-attack is quite slow. The long sword is a disadvantage in close range battles. If I’m tempted by that exhilarating feeling then I have no choice but to accept receiving considerable damage.’

It was something he realised when facing the mongoose. It was easy to be mistaken because of the overwhelming attack, but the two-handed sword was a defensive weapon. If he had a sword in one hand and machine gun in the other then both were cannons. In order to take advantage of the long sword, he must keep a distance and attack. Since the attack speed was slow, there was a considerable delay. Ark reached that conclusive and changed his stance. He took a defense posture instead of an attack posture.

Kyaaak, kyaak!

The mongoose rushed forward swinging its arms. Ark angled the sword and received the attack.

‘Indeed.....the attack rarely reaches.’

Using Gwisal’s sword to defend was an excellent choice. The only defense skill that Ark learned was ‘Parry.’ If successful, the skill was attack as well as defend. Thanks to his intermediate sword attack, parry hit x4! The defense applied was 45~60% while the damage dealt was 180~240! It was the same standards as warriors who used a steel shield. It wasn’t a perfect defense of course, but it was possible to reduce a considerable amount of damage. Ark used Parry to defend before using Riposte. In a matter of minutes, Ark reduced the mongoose’s health by 70%. But in the process Ark also lost 10% of his health.

‘I received 10% damage while I dealt 70% so if I maintain this then it is possible to win!’

That's what Ark was thinking. While he was attacking and counter-attacking, the mongoose was also thinking. It hopped back and started spewing fire. Ark lost 10% of his health and was in a critical condition.

'This damn mongoose.....it noticed my weak point!'

Of course he couldn't block the flames with his sword. The flame resistance cloak only reduced the damage by 50%. And it wasn't possible to do a counter-attack.

"If it continues like this then it won't be possible. Victory or defeat! Demonic Opening!"

Ark shouted as he lifted Gwisal's sword.

Kiyaaaaak!

Gwisal's sword trembled and the appalling sound of a ghost's wail emerged from the sword. After the ghosts emerged they stuck onto the sword. It was as if the ghosts' form had been tattooed on the blade. It was the special option of Gwisal's sword that increased damage by 20% in exchange for his health, Demonic Opening! Since he was in a critical condition, adrenaline also activated. His damage, critical hit, evasion and reaction rate all increased dramatically! He felt an incredible surge of power that made he want to pounce and tear off some flesh.

"Take this, Dark blade!"

Kkiyaaaaak, chiing!

Every time he swung the sword, the ghosts would wail and the mongoose would have its health decreased by a large amount. The overwhelming attack exceeded the monster's defense. The mongoose who fell into a critical condition shrieked and tried to turn around. Then it began to flee at a tremendous rate. Ark quickly chased it. Demonic Opening was a double-edged sword. His attack increased explosively but he would lose 5 health every second. Since he only had 300 health left, he could only last 1 minute. 40 seconds had already passed so he only had 100 health left. If he failed to kill it in 20 seconds then he would be devoured by the ghosts. Gwisal's sword noticed that Ark didn't have a lot of health left. The monster engraved on the blade started to climb up his arm.

"The remaining time is 15 seconds.....if I can't knock it down then I'll die!"

"Sprint!"

Ark explosively dashed forward like he was in a race and narrowed the distance. And when he reached the corner, the mongoose suddenly turned around.

‘Huk, was luring me its plan?’

If Ark couldn’t knock it down in one blow the he would be vulnerable to a counterattack. However it was too late to stop.

‘If I can’t kill it then I’ll die!’

Ark clenched his teeth and swung his sword. A sharp scream as well as the ghost’s wail shook the cave. The mongoose’s body was split in half and a message window quickly appeared.

-Your level has risen.

You have learnt a new skill.

Drastic measures — Sword cutting into two (Beginner, passive): You’ve dug into the enemy’s chest and split it apart with one murderous stroke. This technique relies more on the sharpness of the sword and the weight of the blow than the user’s ability. Expert craftsmen who dedicate their spirits to the sword will craft an excellent sword. Among them, only those who use the sword with both hands can learn this technique.

<If the enemy has less than 10% health then a successful critical it will have a 10% chance of instantly killing it. If you are successful then there is a x1,2 chance of gaining extra experience and a x1,2 of the best items dropping. (Rare skill only available for two-handed swords)>

‘A rare two-handed sword only skill?’

But he couldn’t relax while reading the information window.

“Demonic Opening off!”

When Ark quickly raised his voice, the ghostly pattern that had almost reached his heart scattered like powder. He only had 7.1 seconds left until all his health was gone.

‘Phew.....This isn’t a skill that I can use too excessively.’

“Wah.....!”

Deimos and Dedric approached while Dedric let out a sound of admiration.

“Master, somehow you were very cool.”

“Don’t worry, I’ll let you eat your fill so you don’t have to flatter me.”

“Hehehe, you noticed?”

“Anyway, you guys also suffered fighting on an empty stomach. I’ll let you eat as much as possible.”

“As expected from Master. Did you know? I really do respect Master.”

Normally they made an uproar when he forced them to eat food. Now the summons were aware of the importance of food after starving. Sometimes it might be necessary to make them starve.....

‘Well, they haven’t complained about food after their re-training at Lancel Village so it shouldn’t be necessary.’

Ark began to collect the loot from the normal mongooses while Dedric laughed. As expected from a beast monster, the items that dropped were quite trivial. In New World, there was a casual relationship between the type of monster and the items they would drop. In other words, humanoid monsters wouldn’t drop leather or meat. Instead they had a high probability of dropping weapons and armour. On the other hand, it was hard to find weapons or armour from a beast animal. Of course, that didn’t mean there was zero chance of it dropping. In the case of man-eating animals, sometimes they won’t digest the items and would drop armour or weapons. But the odds were so low that it was atrocious. Leather, meat and bone was the most that he expected to drop.

‘Still it is lucky that I found a lot of ingredients.’

Ark swept up the items and walked towards the special monster. The special monster had a high probability of dropping deluxe items. Since it was killed by being cut in two, there was a high probability that it would drop the best item. Ark excitedly searched the mongoose’s body.

“Huk, t-this is.....?”

The item that the mongoose dropped was a deep red bead. Ark had seen a similar item before. It was the Shining Slime Essence that dropped previously. Ark looked at the information with a trembling heart.

Mongoose Essence (Fire)

This is the essence of the mongoose that only lives in the snowy mountains in another dimension.

*The information regarding the Mongoose Essence has been grasped using the excellent intuition of an advanced survival chef.

Sometimes a mutated mongoose will appear among hundreds with a special property. In some cases, the crystals are the source of the mongoose's power. Currently there are 7 types of crystals identified and they are Fire, Ice, Earth, Wind, Lightning, Darkness, Light. Each essence possesses the power of its relevant attribute.

If a player gathers all the attributes then they can freely manipulate the elements.

<Monster Essence Rating: D>

'As expected, this is an immortality pill. In addition.....'

There were at least 7 different types of immortality pills! Then wouldn't the effects be tremendous? He got an extravagant effect just from his one Slime's Immortality Pill. Of course, the Slime's Essence had a B rating. The mongoose only had a D rating so the effect would be smaller. But it was a different story if there were 7 types. That meant he could get a bonus 7 times. And if he collected everything then a set bonus would be applied.

'If I gather everything then it would be even better than the Slime's Immortality Pill. In addition, I wandered the snowy mountains for several days without seeing one mongoose. That means all the mongooses are gathered in this cave. If I wander around this cave then I might find the remaining essences. The problem is the remaining ingredients.....'

Ark quickly put the essence in a pot and heated it up. Soon a black smoke rose and a red lump of jelly was made. Just as before, a new message window popped up registering a new recipe.

'Mongoose's (Fire) Immortality Pill' recipe.

Shining Jelly Mongoose Essence (Fire) 1/1

Purified water 3/10

Icecap's decision 16/20

Seolmocho 14/20

Ark's face was a little bit disappointed after he checked the recipe. The ingredients necessary were easily available in the area. And the maximum number required was 20. It might have a lower potency than expected. However Ark shook his head.

'No, I don't know if the difficulty of gathering ingredients for the Slime's Immortality Pill was unusual. I can check the efficiency after I make it. The ingredients can't be bought and there will still be a bonus effect no matter the efficiency.'

Ark started to gather the desired ingredients. Collecting the ingredients was a cinch. There were quite a few of the snow crystals in the crevasses. And he was able to recover the Seolmocho from the bushes surrounding the cave. He could obtain purified water anywhere by putting snow into his pot. And just as he was about to make the immortality pill.

"Master, when are you going to give the meal?"

"Wait a moment. I'll quickly create this....."

Ark confidently said before he jumped and stopped his movements.

'Wait? Am I just going to blindly make this?'

He had forgotten in the excitement of finding the essence. Making the immortality pill was difficult and time-consuming work.....He needed to stir the pot, adjust the fire and wait for it to mature before it was completed. It took him 72 hours to create the Slime's Immortality Pill! It had a lower rating but it would still probably take some time.

'While I'm doing that, I won't be able to create other dishes.'

That was the problem. It wasn't possible to use the pot until the immortality pill was completed. While he was blindly waiting, everyone would starve and die. Ark started sweating at the thought.

'I almost made a huge mistake.'

Ark immediately made a mongoose soup full of ingredients.

"There's plenty of ingredients so you can eat this by yourself."

Dedric was tired of being hungry and poured the soup made with new ingredients straight down his throat. Fortunately, the mongoose soup was a food that gave a good effect.

-You have made the survival cooking dish 'Warm Mongoose Soup.'

The mix of herbs in a rich meat soup warms the chest. The taste of the spices also adds to the meat.

<Satiety +70%, Body Temperature +70%, Satiety or Body Temperature won't fall for 10 minutes>

"Hah, hah.....now I don't need to eat anymore."

Dedric rubbed his protruding belly as he looked at the food information window. It was a good food to eat in the ice cave.

'Okay, I have a lot of ingredients. Once I gather the herbs and meat and cook a lot of dishes then I can start the immortality pill.'

Ark created one dish for each of them and ate it on the spot. In order to collect the rest of the ingredients and kill the remaining mongoose, he started exploring the cave.

"Look in every corner of the cave for a special monster! Ah, before that.....Snake, from now on don't go wandering off without my permission. Understood?"

Ark didn't forget to pay attention to Snake.

Ssak ssak ssak..... Ssak ssak ssak!

But Snake's reaction was a bit odd. Although it paid attention to Ark, Snake kept on looking around the cave with restless eyes. In the beginning he thought it was worried about the mongoose who was its natural enemy. But when Ark thought about it, the reason might not be so simple. If it knew about its enemy then why did Snake go into the cave by itself?

"Wait? Is that the reason?"

Was Snake being influenced by the skill 'Stalking?' Stalking was Snake's special skill which allowed it to find items in the surroundings. There was a possibility that it instinctively knew an item was hidden in the cave.

'That's right. Snake's stalking skill allows it to easily find items hidden in dungeons!'

Ark's pupils turned to gold at the crazy idea. Ark asked in a friendly voice.

"Snake, are you attracted to something?"

Ssak ssak ssak!

Snake nodded its head and waited.

"Okay, please guide me. I'll go where you point."

Ark headed in the direction that Snake's tongue pointed to. Every time he turned the corner, there was a group of mongooses gathered together. They ranged from 3-10 mongooses. But Ark wasn't worried now that his satiety was full. But it was impossible to deal with ten.

"Dedric, scout ahead."

"Yes!"

Ark beat a suitable number of mongooses and moved forward. The scale of the ice caves was bigger than he thought. Although he didn't look everywhere, it still took some time to head in the right direction. However Ark didn't feel bored.

"Just like the snowy mountains, the scenery here is also beautiful."

Ark fell into a trance at the sight of the ice cave. The rocks and ice tangled together to make a huge ravine. A breathtaking ice bridge hung over it. There were ice pillars several metres thick that lined the bridge. When the light came in from the distant gap in the ceiling and reflected off the pillars, it looked like a cascade of coloured light was shining around the cave. It felt like a crystal palace from a fairy tale.

"Hmm, I'm glad I came here....."

Ark then used his cartographer skill to confirm the dungeon map. He had walked almost a straight line from the entrance. In the meantime, he killed hundreds of mongooses so the meat was piled up in his bag. He had enough extra food stockpiled for emergencies.

'How big is this cave?'

Ark was thinking this when he suddenly stopped. When he followed the exceptionally long passage, a square block of ice appeared. He looked around the area but there was no other way past the barrier.

“Then this is the destination?”

Snake licked its tongue and indicated the opposite wall. Ark tilted his head and explored the barrier. It seemed that something was behind the barrier. It was an object with a shape like a mountain. But one side of the ice was uneven and he couldn't grasp the correct shape.

‘There must be something.....what on earth?’

Ark lowered his head closer and used his sleeve to wipe off some of the fog. However, he could still only see the silhouette of the object. Then, something suddenly moved from behind the barrier. It was a huge object shaped like a mountain. At the top of the object a red light sparkled. He felt a familiar sensation in his body.

‘Monster!’

When Ark's head rose, flames wrapped around the object's body. Then it rushed towards Ark at an incredible speed. Ark became startled and quickly dodged. At the same time, the barrier broke with a large roar. Ice powder scattered as a mongoose was released.

Kkuaaaa!

The cave echoed with the roar of the huge mongoose. A red warning message floated in front of Ark.

-The nightmare boss monster of the East Moon ‘Galgashi’ has appeared.

‘B-Boss monster!’

Ark let out a scream of distress as he rolled along the ground. It had a 10 metre tall body with 5 different tails. It had two red eye and one white eye on its forehead. The 3 eyes rolled around and focused on Ark. It opened its mouth and laughed. The gaping mouth revealed jagged fangs. It looked like it wanted to grasp Ark between its fangs and take a bite out of him.

“Huk!”

Ark quickly raised his body and stood up.

Pababababa, beonduk!

It brandished its claws and made a challenging posture. Thanks to the impact of the claws hitting the ground, Ark once again fell and slid 10 metres.

‘It is difficult to fight on this slippery ice!’

Ark tried to raise his body as Galgashi attacked him again.

Clack clack clack! Clack clack clack clack!

Deimos held out the shield as he came running. However.....slippery! Deimos tumbled down and hit his head on the ice.

“Master!”

At the moment, Dedric used Dark Dash to crash into Galgashi. At the same time, Ark moved sideways using Slide. Although Galgashi tried to step on him, its accuracy was lower in the dark. Thanks to that, Ark was barely able to dodge it. Ark managed to draw his sword and stand in the correct posture.

“It’s sudden, but a boss is always welcomed!”

The boss was an item to Ark. A boss monster would drop a minimum of 1 or more magic items. In addition, the experience was also fabulous. Therefore there was no reason for him to avoid it.

‘Level 400.....it is slightly unreasonable.....’

Its level was a lot higher than the special mongoose he fought earlier. Ark’s current level was 202. With the dark attribute bonus he was level 241. That was a 160 level difference (Author wrote 60 but that must be a mistake). But Ark’s ability was quite high compared to users of the same level. And he could also use Gwisal’s sword. He couldn’t guarantee a victory but it might be possible if he tried.

‘The problem is not the level but the location.’

The floor was very slippery ice. He could stand but it was difficult to move quickly. On the other hand, Galgashi used its claws to dig into the ground and move quickly. Ark felt the overwhelming speed difference straight away.

‘But I can use Slide without any restrictions no matter the terrain. And Galgashi is also a mongoose. I’ve roughly learned their attack patterns after fighting them. If I combine them then I might be able to reduce the speed gap.’

“Slide!”

Ark used slide and began to attack Galgashi like what he envisioned. As expected, Galgashi’s attack pattern wasn’t that different from the mongooses’. The attack consisted of rushing and trying to bit or jumping all over and using its claws. Ark predicted the orbit using Galgashi’s preliminary movements and used slide to dodge it. Kakakakak, Galgashi’s claws scraped the ice every time. Gradually the ice disappeared, revealing the rocky ground. Thanks to that, Deimos was also able to join the battle. However the one that showed outstanding skills in this environment was Dedric.

“Take this. You big fat mongoose!”

Dedric taunted Galgashi who immediately got angry and jumped up. Dedric avoided the attack by flying lower. And Ark and Deimos waited for the moment Galgashi landed to launch an assault. They aimed for the moment it stiffened upon landing. Galgashi staggered and couldn’t fight back properly.

‘If it continues like this then I’ll win!’

Ark was inwardly convinced of his victory.

Roaaaaar!

Galgashi roared with fury and lifted one tail. When it struck the ground, the ground started shaking and something he never imagined happened.

Kwajijijik!

Sparks rose all over the ground.

-You have received lightning damage. 100 damage!

<Every 30 seconds, there will be a 50% chance of shock, electric shock or stun for 3 minutes>

<If you receive an electric shock then your movements speed will slow by 90% for 10 seconds>

“What, what the?” Lightning damage?”

All his movements became slower, like a video was being slowed down. While his arms and legs couldn’t move, Galgashi took advantage and ran up to him.

Snap, Ark flew through the air and hit the ground with a large impact. He felt dizzy. The wide area magic had a range of 10 metres and lasted for 3 minutes. And every 30 seconds for 3 minutes, there was a 50% chance of receiving an unknown status. 'Shock' would simply cause extra damage. But the penalty applied to his movements because of stun would be fatal in a boss attack. With one move, the battle completely changed. The spark just had to touch him and it would trigger that state. Thanks to the sparks, Ark had no access to Galgashi.

'But it is not impossible!'

"Deimos, transform!"

Deimos quickly changed into the saw blade after Ark's command. If Galgashi used his lightning magic then Deimos would be useful. Ark used the saw blade to avoid the sparks and attack. Dedric flying in the air was also unaffected by the lightning. However, lightning was not the only damage Galgashi had. He hit the floor with a different tail and this time an intense storm was caused. The wind grazed his skin and spilt blood.

-You've been hit by the wind blades. 100 damage!

<When hit by the wind blade, there is a 50% chance of 'Bleeding' or 'Muscles Torn'>

<You've had your 'Muscles Torn.' For 10 seconds, your strength and agility will be decreased by 20%>

'Wide area wind magic?'

It became quite the spectacle as time passed. Galgashi didn't use the wide area wind magic to just attack. The storm also whirled around Galgashi and deflected the whip. In addition, wind magic was fatal to flying creatures.

"Ugh!"

Dedric's health was steadily decreased by the wind. Galgashi tormented Ark with a variety of magic. It had 5 tails with different properties and every time a tail was used, a different type of magic would occur. The damage from the magic was not that great. But the problem was the states there were triggered by the magic every time! If he was hit with ice magic then his movements would slow down, while earth magic would activate stun.

'Oh my god, this really is a terrible boss.....'

There was no way for Ark to deal with Galgashi!

Ark couldn't even attack properly and fell into a critical condition.

"No, I can't keep it up for much longer. It's regrettable but I have to live."

It took him a few days to get here. If he died then he would be revived at a village near the red wilderness. Then it would take a few days to get back to the cave. No, there was no guarantee that Ark would be able to find the cave again in East Moon. He might even have to give up on the immortality pill set. Ark made a decision and turned his body around. The entrance was narrow and long. If he escaped through there then the boss wouldn't be able to follow. But his opponent was a boss monster. It wouldn't give up its prey so easily. Galgashi noticed Ark's intent and jumped forward. Galgashi jumped over 10 metres and landed in front of Ark with exposed fangs.

"T-this.....!"

When Ark became confused, Snake shot out from his waist onto the ground. At that moment, Galgashi's eyes focused on Snake. It instinctively forgot about attacking Ark. Galgashi reflexively went for Snake.

Ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak!

Snake moved across and floor and shouted (?).

'Dad, I'll lead it away so run!' Ark seemed to hear. Snake showed impressive loyalty to its Master by facing against its natural enemy.....Ark ran away without looking back.

"Sprint!"

He shared his food with his summons on the snowy mountain. So why? The situation was different. He didn't mind if he died on the snowy mountains but here was different. Since there was no guarantee he could find the cave again, Ark had to live no matter what. But he had no intention of giving up his snake bag.

"Dedric, grab Snake!"

"Eh? Why would I?"

"If Snake dies then I'll let you starve!"

Ark's threat worked. Dedric swallowed and quickly grabbed Snake. Galgashi who had its food taken away immediately emitted light and used wind magic, but Dedric

used acrobatic movements to dodge most of the damage. Then Galgashi's eyes focused on Ark.

Galgashi used its tail again and its whole body was engulfed in flames. Then the projectile flew towards Ark at an incredible pace. It was the same magic used to break the barrier. It was impossible to avoid so Ark turned around and held up his sword. Instantaneously, an intense shock was felt. But it was fortunate that Galgashi used fire magic. Ark's mantle gave him a 50% fire resistance. Thanks to that, the fire damage was halved and he didn't receive any abnormal states. And he slipped and slid towards the entrance due to Galgashi's strike.

"Master, I've saved it. Will you give rice?"

Meanwhile, Dedric had also flew towards the entrance with Snake.

"Well done. Now let's get out of here!"

Ark stood up, grabbed Snake and ran down the narrow passage.

Keuaaaaaang!

The sound of Galgashi banging could be heard from the ice wall behind him. However, it wasn't possible to catch Ark unless it was a mole.

"Damn, what's with that guy?"

Ark let out a burst of anger when he reached the entrance of the cave. It was the first time he met a boss where he didn't have any answers about how to defeat it. Ark needed to do two things in the dungeon. He had to complete the immortality pill set and find another exit out of the crevasse. In other words, if the boss wasn't protecting an exit then there was no reason to fight it. But it was the first boss monster he encountered since Colossus in Lancel Village.

'I should catch it no matter what!'

Ark had no intention of leaving the ice caves even if he found the exit. He had to kill all the special monsters to complete the set. And since the ice caves were huge, he

assumed that it had a large number of mongooses. If he completed the immortality set then Ark might be able to deal with the boss.

‘There’s just one chance. Next time there is no guarantee that I can escape like before. I have to be definitely sure of my victory before facing it again.’

But would raising his level really allow him to succeed? If it was just levels then Ark could somehow face Galgashi. The problem was the various magic with different attributes that it could use. No matter how much he raised his level, it would be meaningless if he couldn’t deal with the magic.

‘Is there another way?’

But he couldn’t think of an answer to his concerns.

‘I guess I have no choice but to raise my level.’

Ark decided to leave the problem of the boss for the moment. Fighting the boss had taken a lot out of him. Ark took out his pot and made soups using all the meat. After securing the food, he earnestly started the immortality pill creation process.

‘Now shall I get started?’

First was the mongoose essence. Then he added all the other ingredients until colourful halos emerged from the pot and a message window appeared.

-You have gathered all the ingredients necessary to create the Mongoose’s Immortality Pill (Fire).

Now it is time to start the process of creating the immortality pill. Immortality pill Mixing = Crystallization = Maturation. Once it goes through these 3 stages then it is complete.

The estimated duration is 12 hours.

Since it had a low rating, the time taken to create it was only 12 hours. Fortunately, the mixing and crystallization process only took 1 hour each. Ark finished the whole process and carefully placed the covered pot in a corner. The remaining time was 10 hours so he just had to wait. Ark stacked the mongoose soup on the ground and said.

“Dedric, guard it carefully. I’ll be sleeping for a while.”

“I understand.”

“Don’t just eat tons of food. Deimos, watch Dedric.”

Clack clack clack clack.

Deimos nodded. In here it was impossible to release his pets. The summons just had to wait in that one spot while Ark left the game. Fortunately, it didn’t consume mana so Ark didn’t have to worry about that. However, it would be a problem if there was a surprise attack by the mongooses. That was the reason he went back to the entrance of the cave. So Ark placed a sentry in front of the pot and exited the game. After he slept and exercised in reality, the immortality pill had been completed.

-The maturation process has ended and the Mongoose’s Immortality Pill (Fire) has been completed.

*Fame increases by 200

* Intelligence increases by 5.

* Survival cooking skill increases by 10.

* The ‘Monster’s Pill’ information has been updated.

<Number of Immortality Pill completed: 2 >

Ark gulped and looked at it with expectant eyes. Ark who checked the information gave an easy laugh. Ark had been contemplating how to beat Galgashi but now he thought he was a fool.

“Ha, I see. That’s it. Catching Galgashi will be easy!”

Ark once again realized how deceptive the game was. If there was a problem then there would be a key in the area to solve it. It was the same for New World as well. The way to take down the invincible Galgashi was present in the Mongoose’s Immortality Pill information.

“Okay, I see what you mean. If I collect all the immortality pills then defeating Galgashi won’t be a problem.

Ark laughed and raised his body.

“Now, let’s go and gather some immortality pills. Into the dungeon!”

Act 3: Legendary Hero?

“Phew, the weather has become a lot colder.”

Even though it used to be autumn, without even realizing it was now December. The weather was so cold with a few showers that even wearing a thick jumper didn't prevent goose bumps.

“Why do they have to call me today of all days?”

This weather was best for staying at home and playing games. Well, this cold was nothing compared to when he connected to the game.....at least he had the mongoose soup. And it was the same even without the soup. Anyway, wandering in the cold was a hundred times better if he was earning money from it.

“But I have to go out instead of playing the game.....”

He could use that excuse if it was Gwon Hwa-rang or the rehabilitation members. But that excuse wouldn't work with the people Hyun-woo was meeting today. He might even become a corpse if he brought the word game into the conversation.

“Anyway the year-end party.....it has already been a year?”

Hyun-woo looked up at the night sky. He never realised since he had been buried in the game. But once he looked back on it, he realized that it had been an eventful year.

“Above all, I've thankful that my mother has become a lot better.”

When he visited a few days ago, his mother even saw him off. She did it on her own without a wheelchair. It was just a few steps from the bed to the door. Her whole body was covered in sweat as she sat down but his mother just laughed. I'm better.....Hyun-woo, soon I'll be able to leave the hospital. His mother wanted to show that through her actions.

“Please don't force yourself. What if you become worse for no reason?”

Hyun-woo said while leaving, before collapsing in tears on the hospital doorstep. He couldn't repress his happy and excited feelings. There were many times when he had to carry his mother because she couldn't walk. Every time Hyun-woo saw that, he felt like cutting his own legs. Then his mother walked on her own.

‘It was worth paying the higher hospital bills!’

The hospital costs increased every day..... He wouldn't have been able to afford it if it wasn't for the money earned from New World. Hyun-woo's earnings from New

World were three times what he made last year. The result was because of hard work and luck. And the immortality pill collection was also near completion.

'I've already completed 5 out of the 7 pills. Now there are only 2 left. With two days left, I'll be able to complete it within this year. Then I can scrape money again next year! If I finish Magaro's quest then thousands of gold will come pouring in!'

Hyun-woo dreamed about the future and headed to the meeting place. Then 4 serious looking people approached from the other side. The group's character didn't seem that good. With just a glance, Hyun-woo could tell that they were guys who picked random fights in the street. Hyun-woo had experience this situation a lot when he played around in the night life and tried to go around them. But the 4 people narrowed the distance and blocked in front of him.

"Are you Hyun-Woo?"

".....?"

Hyun-woo stopped walking and raised his head. An unknown face looked back at him.

"Who are you?"

"I asked if you are Hyun-woo?"

One guy twisted his face and asked. He was somewhat uncomfortable. Hyun-woo didn't know why, but he could clearly tell what was going on by their attitude and looks. Although they were talking to him, they fully intended to use violence. He could tell the difference from argumentative people from the look in their eyes.

"No. You got the wrong person."

Hyun-woo replied bluntly and tried to walk past only to have one of them grab his shoulder.

"Why are you doing this?"

"Do you think a kid like you can act like that with us?"

The guy pulled back Hyun-woo's shoulder. But Hyun-woo was not the same as before. When he felt the crisis, Hyun-woo's feet reflexively kicked up. Bump, his feet hit the guy's jaw who let go as he stumbled backwards.

"This bitch.....!"

The other 3 members of the group ran up to him. That was when it happened. An emergency bell rang in Hyun-woo's head. If he didn't run away now, he would be hit until he was a dust cloth.

'I have to run away!'

Once he thought of the simple and clear instructions, his body automatically moved. Hyun-woo avoided a punch and raised his knee to the face. The man stumbled with a bleeding nose. Hyun-woo was then grabbed by the collar and automatically used a wrestling technique to break free. Then he kicked the vital spots on both sides of the man's body. With two people collapsed, one guy rushed forward. Hyun-woo used the movements he learned in boxing and lowered his upper body. He launched himself into the air while spinning his body around. He spun as if he was in an action movie.

"Eh? What, what the?"

The guy stuttered with a stupid face. The spinning body fell like a thunderbolt. A giant spin kick technique! It was a technique that he had practiced in his spare time. The guy stumbled and screamed as Hyun-woo kicked him.

'This is a technique!'

Hyun-woo was amazed at his own movements. While training at the police gym, he had used pretty crazy moves. However, his opponents were representatives in boxing, wrestling and even taekwondo. Because he lost every day, he was unaware of how strong he had become. And he never had a chance to test it out. Thanks to the element of surprise, he was able to overwhelm the hooligans in an instant.

"What the? What's going on?"

"Is a movie being made?"

"Oh, it looks great?"

The people who passed by stared and gossiped. Some people even took a video with their phones.

'Dammit, what ignorant people would think this is a movie? Somebody call the police!'

Hyun-woo stared at the people shooting with an angry expression. But there was no time to quarrel with them. Although he managed to defeat the group, this was reality. This battle wouldn't end until everybody was unable to fight. And it would

be difficult if they decided to use a knife. This was the difference between game and reality.

‘For the moment I have to get out of here! I have to get to that place somehow.....’

While the group was wincing in pain, Hyun-woo plunged through the spectators and into an alley. If he made it past the alley then he would be at the appointment place. If he got there then he would be able to avoid the dangerous situation. Hyun-woo ran through the alley at his top speed. And just as he saw the sign for the appointment place and was about to leave the alley.....a spark suddenly bounced in front of him.

Wobble.....when he lost his centre of gravity, someone grabbed his hair. Tremendous strength! Hyun-woo bent backwards as the guy who grabbed him threw him to a corner of the alley. Although Hyun-woo wasn’t small, he was thrown lightly through the air and landed heavily. The rest of the group followed and kicked Hyun-woo several times before finally stopping.

“Those stupid guys, they couldn’t even handle one kid?”

“I’m really sorry. Hyung-nim.”

“Block the alley and don’t let anyone see.”

Some hooligans followed the command and blocked the alley entrance. Hyun-woo was finally able to determine the face of the leader. He was a huge figure with short hair and a scar on his face. His appearance clearly indicated a gangster to anyone who looked at him.

“Why are you doing this? Cough!”

Once again he was kicked. While Hyun-woo bent over in pain, the leader put on gloves and laughed.

“Shut up and listen. I won’t speak for long. We have no grudge against you. So just close your eyes while I break the bones in your arms. If you don’t fight back then you’ll look pretty in the photo.”

“Yes?”

“Or you can be photographed beaten up. It is your choice.”

“T-that.....!”

Hyun-woo looked at the man with an astounded look. He suddenly grabbed a person in the street and was going to break his arm? What was going on? However he knew that the leader wasn't joking around. Just by looking at his eyes, Hyun-woo could tell that the leader was serious.

'What the hell? Who are these people?'

Hyun-woo's body began to tremble. In the game he could fight a group of ogres without even blinking. However reality was different from a game. These guys were tiny compared to the ogres. But it wasn't possible to compare the intimidating feeling of these guys to the ogres inside a game. Also, he didn't like realistic violence. His fear when he imagined the upcoming violence was tremendous.

"Who are earth are you? I didn't even do anything....."

"You can only answer yes or no. Say anything else and I will pull out a tooth."

The leader growled.

'It's impossible.'

When Hyun-woo sweated and shut his mouth, the guy laughed and grabbed one arm. He wanted to completely break Hyun-woo's arms. He wanted to completely break Hyun-woo's arm. Hyun-woo panicked. But it wasn't because of the pain.

'If my arm breaks then I won't be able to play the game!'

If he couldn't play the game then of course he couldn't make any money. Then what about his mother's hospital bills? The cost of living? The loan situation.....like an advertisement, all these images came rushing through Hyun-woo's head. And the conclusion was simple. Whatever else happened, he could not allow his arm to be broken. Hyun-woo turned his arm with all his strength and elbowed the guy.

"Cough!"

"This bastard.....Do you want to be unable to use your leg anymore?"

"I don't know what's going on but please don't do this!"

"Didn't I tell you to shut up? Ya, grab him and immobilize him!"

The hooligans grabbed his limbs and held him down. Then the leader once again lifted the brick over his arm. Now Hyun-woo could only watch his arm get broken!

"N-no!"

Hyun-woo screamed. In this unfair situation, he had no power to do anything. So far, he had been through a lot of these situations and never once had anyone helped him. Just like the people from a while ago who were taking photos or videos with their phones. If any one of them had reported it then the police would've already come running. Yes, that was Hyun-woo's life. However, this time was different. When Hyun-woo screamed, an unexpected voice was heard from outside the alley.

"Eh? What scene is this?"

The hooligans flinched and turned their heads around. One guy was entering the alley wearing slippers. The 170 centimetre tall guy looked like a dwarf next to the hooligans. The hooligans put on a tough face and asked him.

"Who are you? If you don't want to die then disappear."

Usually an ordinary person would bow their heads and run off right away. However the man just ignored it and approached the group.

"Is this Hyun-woo?"

Hyun-woo was surprised and lifted his head.

"Lee Myung-ryong teacher?"

"Eh? That really is Hyun-woo? Why are you playing around in such a place?"

The small person.....Lee Myung-ryong muttered in an incredulous voice.

"Teacher? The seal on his clothes shows that he is someone who teaches taekwondo at a dojo."

"Why don't you run away before we make your face become puffy hey?"

The hooligans threatened as they tried to bully Lee Myung-ryong. Indeed, a taekwondo teacher would just be amusing to a gang. And they didn't consider him seriously thanks to his 170 centimetre height and small physique. But they were wrong. The person they were threatening was the current leader of the number 1 SWAT team and a former national taekwondo representative. Although a sashimi knife was thrust underneath his nose, the man had a heart of steel and didn't even blink. The leader became angry and swung his fist at Lee Myung-ryong.

Bam!

With a loud sound, the impact caused his head to rise by 90 degrees. Lee Myung-ryong sighed and wiped away the blood at his mouth.

"It's been a long time since I was hit. Well ,are you satisfied? So let's stop, yes?"

"What the, this bastard?"

Once again there was a loud bam as Lee Myung-ryong was kicked in the stomach. His 190 centimetre tall frame had a significant amount of weight behind it. Lee Myung-ryong collapsed from the blow.

"T-Teacher.....!"

Hyun-woo looked at Lee Myung-ryong with disbelieving eyes. Although he was taken by surprise, the hooligans had been able to take down Hyun-woo. But for Lee Myung-ryong who was in charge of the police gym to not even be able to land one blow? Why?

"Ha, this kid. He seemed quite relieved when his teacher appeared."

"Did you see him stop shaking?"

"Too bad I took care of him in a few minutes."

The leader chuckled and approached Hyun-woo again. Then he lifted the brick again. However, Lee Myung-ryong who had been completely knocked down just got up like nothing happened.

"Embarrassing me in front of my pupil....."

"What the? This bastard?"

"Now, let's see. My mouth is bleeding.....and now my stomach is bruised. In this case, the usual punishment would be 4 weeks. But if I claim self defense, I won't get 4 weeks even if I beat you up like a dog. Do you guys know what that means?"

Lee Myung-ryong laughed as he indicated towards his face.

"You guys are now dead."

"What are you talking about?"

"Crush him!"

The hooligans rushed forward at their leader's order. Some of them picked up pieces of timber with a murderous atmosphere. But Lee Myung-ryong just looked at Hyun-woo mischievously.

"Hyun-woo, this will be an outdoor lesson!"

"Teacher, danger!"

"What?"

Lee Myung-ryong lightly avoided the timber and spread his arms.

Bump!

The chin of a hooligan shook before he suddenly collapsed. Lee Myung-ryong had lightly walked through the hooligans and extended his fist. If his upper body was dragged then he would gently elbow them. As expected, the hooligan fell down and wasn't able to move. The same thing occurred to the remaining two members. Lee Myung-ryong stepped up to the members lying down and pressed down on their temples with his heel, causing them to scream.

"These guys are like leeches. They won't stop with just a single blow."

"What are you doing? Those stupid fools! Why can't you get up?"

However, the hooligans lying on the ground just continued sweating and couldn't even breathe properly. After that the leader rushed towards Lee Myung-ryong.

"I'll take care of him with one shot to the face!"

His fist couldn't be seen. Although it wasn't clearly seen, suddenly there was the sound of the leader's face being punched and moving 90 degrees.

"It really was one shot."

"Huk!"

The man let out a muffled scream and bent at the waist. It was a rare sight. The small dwarf just walked forward. But when he moved forward, the huge figure of the leader screamed. The leader's face instantly turned blue. Although he didn't fall down, it wasn't because of the leader's abilities. He just wasn't allowed to fall. Lee Myung-ryong casually walked up to him and grabbed his hair. Then he slammed the leader into a corner and inspected his pockets. Lee Myung-ryong laughed as he took out the wallet and confirmed the identity.

“Boss of the Pleasant Smile Company, Wang Ho.....”

“You.....do you think you will be safe after doing a thing like this? I’ll find you gym and beat you to death!”

“What?”

Lee Myung-ryong stared at Wang Ho incredulously before bursting out with wild laughter.

“Hahahahaha, really? That will be fine with me. I’ll look forward to your performance then.”

“What, what the?”

“It seems he still can’t grasp the situation.”

“Captain, what happened?”

At that time, a few people with big shoulders peeped in from outside the alley. Hyun-woo also knew their faces. It was the SWAT team members that he exercised with at the gym. The former boxer and wrestler were also there. Yes, the one who called Hyun-woo out in this harsh weather was Lee Myung-ryong. It was the year-end party of the number 1 SWAT team.

“It’s not a big deal. I’m just going to clean up the situation so wait a moment. Hey, let’s do an exchange.”

Lee Myung-ryong pulled out a wallet and threw it towards Wang Ho. Wang Ho opened the wallet with confused eyes and suddenly paled. Inside the wallet was the identification of the captain of the number 1 SWAT team.

“I’m also the teacher of a gym not far from here.”

“If it is the number 1 SWAT team, don’t tell me.....the so called demon of the National Police Agency.....”

“That’s right. And this guy is my one and only beloved disciple. So does this situation make more sense now?”

Lee Myung-ryong slapped the frozen back of Wang Ho and spoke.

“Well, let’s clean this up. Looking at the situation, you wouldn’t attack without a reason.....why don’t you tell me the reason why you dragged an innocent person into this? Or do you want to go for a ride? Either is welcome. If you decided not to

cooperate then the interrogation will become quite violent and last for a while. The police taking crime really seriously."

Wang Ho's sweat started dripping down as he looked away. Lee Myung-ryong waited for a moment before slowly getting up.

"I guess that's it. Shall we test your patience?"

"W-wait a minute. Actually.....I was asked to do this."

"Asked?"

"Yes, a client's son asked me to break his arms and take some pictures.....that's the truth. Don't you know? There is no way I would start a fight if money wasn't involved."

"Oh, someone asked you to break the arms? What a noble hobby. Then his name?"

"Lee Myung-ban....."

Lee Myung-ryong looked at Hyun-woo. He was asking if Hyun-woo knew the name. Hyun-woo shook his head and Lee Myung-ryong immediately stared at Wang Ho.

"Do you want to go to hell?"

"R-really. I didn't really understand but there was some grudge because of a game. The game is called New World. The person who gave me orders is called Andel."

"Andel!"

Hyun-woo jumped. Lee Myung-ryong roughly understood the situation and nodded.

"You're not lying. Okay, you know his address right?"

Lee Myung-ryong forced Wang Ho to write down the address.

"It is too troublesome to put small fries like you in jail and then write up the reports. I get a rash whenever I look at guys like them. But if Hyun-woo ever sees you again.....you understand?"

Wang Ho nodded frantically with a stricken face. Lee Myung-ryong tapped his cheek and got up.

"Let's go Hyun-woo."

As expected from the leader of a SWAT team, Lee Myung-ryong didn't hesitate in his actions at all. As soon as he left the alley, he took a cab to the address. It was a 100 square metre block of apartments in Gangnam. An ordinary person wouldn't be able to enter. But once the police identification was shown to the guard, he was quickly ushered in.

"It isn't necessary to do this."

When the situation became larger than he thought, Hyun-woo spoke nervously. However, Lee Myung-ryong didn't pay any attention and raised his hand to the doorbell. Then he saw the Lee Kyung-Ho nameplate next to the doorbell and hesitated.

"Dammit, no wonder why the address was familiar....."

"What's wrong?"

"No. I've come here so I should see it through to the end."

"Who is it?"

A voice spoke through the loudspeaker when the bell was pressed.

"This is Lee Myung-ryong from the number 1 SWAT team."

"Oh, understood. Did you want to speak to the chief?"

"Can you ask if I may have a word?"

"Okay."

The door soon opened and a 50 year old man greeted them. The spacious living room looked like a soccer ball. There was also a two levels of stairs leading up. Hyun-woo quickly became depressed. Why did this person live in a 100 square apartment while he lived in one with a hole in the wall? Hyun-woo was scared of fighting a rich person. He didn't know how to deal with humans who have overflowing money. In addition, Lee Myung-ryong also seemed uncomfortable.....as he paced back and forth.

"Yes, what brought you here?"

"It is about your son."

"My son?"

The middle aged man.....Lee Kyung-Ho looked confused. Lee Myung-ryong sighed and explained the situation that occurred. Then the facial muscles of Lee Kyung-Ho distorted and made an ugly expression. But after a moment, he smiled and took out a cigarette before saying.

"I still don't see what's wrong. Don't tell me you believe the words of those delinquents? There is no way my son would do such a thing, since isn't it unfair for them to implicate him? Well, you probably just came to investigate the claims."

".....Well, that's right. Can I see your son?"

"I don't understand what you're saying."

Lee Kyung-Ho frowned as he looked at Lee Myung-ryong. Then he took out a 1,000,000 won check and placed it on the table.

"As an adult, we can't pretend to be ignorant of the social rules. In addition, my son's name was mentioned. I'll have a chat with some juniors and have them investigate it. And since your friend seems to be injured, he can use this to pay for the medical costs."

He said it in a soft voice but there was clearly a hidden threat. It was a lot more intimidating than the roars of the gangsters! Hyun-woo could guess Lee Kyung-Ho's status just by those words. Perhaps he was a former high ranking police officer. It was the reason Lee Myung-ryong frowned when looking at the nameplate. Lee Myung-ryong looked at the cheque and muttered in a low voice.

"Necessary?"

".....No. I hate smelly money."

Although Hyun-woo needed money, he also didn't grab it. Lee Myung-ryong hit the table with both hands and got up.

"Lee Kyung-Ho ssi."

"What? Lee Kyung-Ho ssi?"

"Although there is no evidence, he still did it. Instead of giving us money, you should use it to re-educate your son. If this happens again then I won't come visit Lee Kyung-Ho ssi. I'll meet your son directly. Since it is Lee Kyung-Ho ssi, he will be released in a couple of hours but your son would find those hours horrible."

"You, are you threatening me?"

"Threatening? Was that what you heard?"

Lee Myung-ryong smiled and nodded.

"You heard well."

Then Lee Myung-ryong finally left the apartment.

".....I'm sorry. Because of me....."

Hyun-woo spoke in a concerned voice as they walked. Their opponent was a former high ranking police officer. Lee Myung-ryong had probably repressed his anger. It was because of the attitude which blatantly ignored Lee Myung-ryong. However, it was useless to become anxious over something that might happen in the future. Hyun-woo wasn't stupid. He knew that this would cause trouble for Lee Myung-ryong.

"Child, don't let alcohol make you cocky. That man will not leave his son alone. Anyway, now that Andel kid won't be able to bother you anymore."

Lee Myung-ryong hit Hyun-woo on the back and laughed. There was a person watching them from an apartment balcony towering in the sky like a medieval castle.

"That impertinent child....."

Lee Kyung-Ho blew out cigarette smoke and lifted his phone.

"It is Lee Kyung-Ho. Let me speak to the Police Commissioner for a little bit. Tell him it is the former captain of the police prosecutors. Yes, ah, is that you? It's me. Do you know someone called Lee Myung-ryong? Do you have any idea about this friend's performance? No, it's not a big deal....."

Things have become even more twisted up. Reality wasn't as simple as a game.

"Is it like the Chief expected?"

Ho Myung-hwan sighed while playing with his ball-point pen. Recently, he had been concentrating on the test taker Ark. Although he never actually saw it, the reports allowed him to indirectly experience the game. Ark was like the fictional hero of a novel to him. And he felt a sense of satisfaction that no one in the Planning Department knew about Ark. Once a big incident happened then Ark would be clearly seen. He truly believed that and hoped the event would occur soon. Then Ark became the Lord of Silvana a while ago. He participated in the siege and won over Alan and the pioneers. Ha Myung-woo thought it was just due to luck but Ho Myung-hwan who had read the previous reports thought otherwise.

“I’ve been looking forward to this report.....”

But the report that arrived was disappointing. He summarized it simply.

Due to certain circumstances, Dark Eden became a separate attack group during the siege. While Dawn Blade and Hermes were fighting in critical conditions, there was a chance for him to become the Lord. But he didn’t have the power to prevent the territory from being taken away during the next siege. There was no mentions of the schemes and corruption that occurred. Hyun-woo had become cautious and only wrote the bare minimum in the report. And the bare minimum happened to be what the Planning Department’s Chief Ha Myung-woo expected.

Ho Myung-hwan became discouraged.

“Naturally the situation should be like that but.....”

Since it was Ark, he expected to see the actions of a protagonist in the report. But he didn’t even want to defend the castle.

“Unfortunately, this report means that he will definitely be eliminated in the first round of eliminations.”

It had been 1 year since the company started the entrance examination.

But there were still no candidates that met Global Exos requirements. Of course, they didn’t expect the requirements to be met in a year. But they were providing the examinees with 1,500,000 won a month and there were 2000 candidates. 30 billion won was being poured into this project every month. When considering the scale of Global Exos, it wasn’t a big burden but as a business they couldn’t pay for the income forever.

[There is no reason to invest in candidates with low expectations. The senior executives rational is they would rather invest in candidates with potential. Therefore the candidates will be watched in the next few months and then an eliminated notice will be sent to the

lower 50% of test takers. The Planning Department should be prepared so there is no setback to this plan.]

That was the official notice from headquarters that recently came. But the Planning Department had already screened all the eliminated candidates. Ark was one of them which was why Ho Myung-hwan had paid more attention to this report.

'But because the Lordship was taken away.....now in a couple of months. Will an incident occur to change the Planning Department's mind?'

"Hey, have you seen the video posted this morning?"

Ha Myung-woo shouted at him the moment he came in.

"Yes? Video?"

"You haven't seen it yet. I'll link you the address."

When he connected to the address Ha Myung-woo sent him, it was an information site related to New World.

"Click on this and take a look."

Ha Myung-woo pointed to a video board. The views on the video had exploded during the few hours it had been posted. The title was 'Realistic Fight Scene.' Although the views were considerable, there were thousands of similar movies showing up every day. So why was the Chief making such a fuss? Ho Myung-hwan clicked on the video with a strange expression. It was taken with a mobile phone so the picture quality was very poor. It was obviously the contents that attracted people's attention.

Just like the title, the content was a 1 vs 4 fight situation on the dark streets. It wasn't different from a common video. But after the people involved exchanged some greetings, an exciting action scene unfolded. The jaw was struck by a kick and then the knee was raised. But the climax was the full body spin kick that slammed into the opponent. It was also known as a windmill technique. It was a very hard kick that was rarely seen in battle. The video ended after 1 minute with the young man running into an alley but it left a strong impression. If it wasn't a staged scene then it required considerable amounts of skill. There were already thousands of comments underneath the video.

-The spin kick is quite cool.

-Are you stupid? It is 100% staged. Is this to promote a new movie coming out?

-It's not staged. I saw it by chance.

-But what happened to the guy after that?

-Ah, you should've filmed it to the end. Now what?

Ho Myung-hwan became puzzled after reading the comments and asked.

"It is wonderful but did they post this video in the wrong place?"

"No there's more. Look further down."

"Yes?"

Ho Myung-hwan moved the screen using his mouse. He soon realized why this video was posted on an information site about New World.

-But isn't the main guy in the movie similar to this character?

The person then attached a video in the next comment.

"Eh? This.....this is?"

Ho Myung-hwan had seen that video dozens of times. It was the video that had become a hot topic on the Internet a few months ago. The culmination of the Event Quest in New World, the video displayed the user who successfully defeated the boss Valderas. When the video was posted, there was a lot of talk about whether he was a NPC or user. But Global Exos didn't have any access to the servers and failed to grasp the information. Thanks to that, Ha Myung-woo had to appear on TV and make some excuses.

Ho Myung-hwan stared at the video with surprised eyes. One was a fast moving video taken on a mobile phone while the other was a blurry game screen. In both videos, the face of the protagonist wasn't clearly seen. However at first glance, the face contours, body type and hairstyle were remarkably similar. In addition, their behaviours were also similar when they kicked. Everybody had a different preliminary kicking motion, from the angle of their leg or their hand movements. It would be very difficult to imitate.

"Perhaps.....?"

"The video was sent to the image analysis lab. The probability of him being the same person is 82%. It can't be a coincident. I've already looked into it."

Ha Myung-woo said as he clenched his fists.

Ha Myung-woo had ran around for weeks trying to find the user who fought Valderas. However, the problem was that he didn't register in the Hall of Fame. Ha Myung-woo thought he might've been an NPC and gave up halfway.....but now after several months, he had finally found a clue.

"Ho Myung-hwan, the user who was the Lord of Silvana the other day.....what was his ID?"

"You mean Ark?"

"Although his report should've come in, you didn't mention anything."

"That....."

Ho Myung-hwan are scratched his head and gave a brief description of the contents of the reports. Ha Myung-woo just laughed like he already knew it.

"I told you. He wasn't added to the eliminated list in vain. There was a good reason. Anyway, I have no interest in him so please look for the person in this video from now on. I don't want to face a similar incident. He fought against Valderas so he should be around."

"How?"

"The fight was noisy so the police might've interfered. And there might be a person who took a better quality video so look around the information sites. No matter what happens, you'll be compensated if you find that person. But you have to conceal that Global Exos is intervening. Because it is publicly thought that the person who defeated Valderas is an NPC. Do you understand what I mean?"

"Yes, I understand."

Ho Myung-hwan threw Ark's report that he was holding in his hand onto his desk. Ha Myung-woo was unaware that the person he was looking for was right underneath his nose. And now Ho Myung-hwan also started looking in the wrong place. It was a sad sight indeed.

Act 4: Radun

"Deimos, block the other side!"

Clatter, clatter! Deimos' bones shook as he ran. He slid on the icy path, turned and raised his shield. Something bumped into the shield as a blurry form emerged in the darkness. They disappeared again but it was clearly a mongoose. It was a mongoose with black fur.

"That's it. We ran it down. Dedric, lure the other mongooses and gain some time."

"Understood Master. I'll leave it to you."

Dedric provoked three mongooses by shaking his hips. Meanwhile Ark stood and blocked the other side of the passage.

"Mind's Eye!"

It suddenly became dark. But in a moment, sound waves just like the sonar waves used by deep sea submarines emerged and he clearly saw the shape of the passage. It was the special effect of his rare ring, Mind's Eye. When the sonar scanned an area, he immediately knew where the black mongoose was. On one side was Deimos and since Ark was blocking the way, the mongoose used a special skill called 'Shadow' to hide its body in a crack. It was aiming for a chance to escape.

'This time I won't miss!'

Ark had spent 2 weeks exploring the cave and making his map. His primary goal had been to complete the Mongoose Essence collection. While sweeping through the cave and fighting mongooses, he had seen several with different attributes such as the one with blue fur or the mongoose with yellow fur.....they each possessed a different attribute that matched them. In addition, they were never alone. He was lucky that he accidentally caught the first fire mongoose by itself. Usually he would have a life and death battle with four or five mongooses. Of course, at first he couldn't handle it. So he used the system where Dedric and Deimos lured the special mongooses while he fought the normal mob and ran away using 'Sprint' if he was close to dying. The battles were always like walking a thin plank of ice. But over time he managed to raise his levels. Not only that, his skill levels also became better and he became more accustomed to using Gwisal's sword.

'Without the Sword-Hand Combat skill, I wouldn't be able to use random weapons.'

Ark knew that he hadn't used 100% of Gwisal's attack power. It had different characteristics from a normal sword or dagger. Of course he needed time to adapt to the characteristics after changing weapons. It was the 'Adaptation' system. After he changed weapons, the impact was too intense and unexpected. But once he continued to use Gwisal's sword, he could sense the attacks become increasingly stronger. And he also corrected the disruption to his balance that he felt when he

first used it. Thanks to that, Ark was able to use 100% of Gwisal's damage and there was no discomfort when he used kicks. He used Gwisal's sword like a razor while the kick would deal a terrible blow!

Ark used that combination and had fun fighting the monsters. So 2 left.....after fire, he had collected 4 more mongoose essences, the Earth, Wind, Ice and Lightning. And now the special mongoose in front of him had the darkness attribute.

'Damn, haven't I already wasted a few days because of this guy?'

He had found the mongoose with the darkness attribute a few days ago. However, this mongoose was different from the ones with other attributes. While Ark was fighting the normal mobs, the dark mongoose hid using 'Shadow' and fled. It was irritating because its 'Shadow' skill was different from stealth. Unless it attacked first, 'Shadow' wouldn't be released even if Ark managed to hit it. Because of that, Ark repeatedly missed it and then he would spend several hours searching for the mongoose again. It happened 5 times before Ark finally managed to corner it.

'The duration of Mind's Eye is 1 minute. It must be a quick fight!'

"Demonic Opening!"

Kiiyaaaaaak-!

The seal on Gwisal's sword was loosened and the demons appeared on the blade. Ark quickly narrowed the distance and struck the mongoose in the side with Dark Blade.

Keeeeek!

The darkness mongoose fell down. But once he finished hitting it, the shape was once again assimilated into the darkness thanks to 'Shadow.'

"Dark Dance!"

Ark ran close using fast movements and continuously used the chain skill Dark Strike. The darkness mongoose was a professional in escaping so it was faster than the other mongooses. But its attack and defense was lower than a normal mongoose. Once he caught it, it was just a matter of time before the mongoose would be defeated. Its health quickly decreased as it was hit by the sword. The mongoose felt the crisis and used 'Darkness,' but Ark was impervious to the magic since he was using Mind's Eye. Ark captured the mongoose and persistently swung his sword. When the mongoose was driven to a critical condition, Ark's vision suddenly

became lighter and the shape of the mongoose disappeared. One minute had passed and the effects of 'Mind's Eye' disappeared.

"Sheesh, I almost caught it.....!"

At the same time, he couldn't hear the sound of footsteps anyone. The mongoose was cunning and killed the sound of its footsteps once Ark clearly couldn't see it anymore.

'I don't want to spend another few hours searching. Where is it?'

Ark surveyed the area. Deimos was blocking the entrance so there was no room for the mongoose to squeeze past. It might be thinking of going to the relatively wide side where Ark was. However, he couldn't just blindly swing his sword. If he moved in the wrong direction then it would run away.

'Only one chance.....then.....'

"Where are you hiding? You beep-beep-beep bastard!"

Ark's voice echoed through the cave. Intermediate 'Intimidation'! Some icy powder instantly dropped a few metres away. Ark's eyes started glittering.

"There you are, Sprint!"

Ark shot forward like an arrow and swung his sword. There was an exhilarating feeling in his fingertips. At the same time, some blood appeared in an empty space. And slowly the black fur of the mongoose was revealed.....the mongoose let out a groan as it was split in half.

"That's it, I finally got it!"

"M-Master. Please help me. It is impossible anymore!"

Then Dedric came flying from the other side. His wings were torn by the mongooses and he was in a critical condition.

"Good work. You can rest now. Deimos, let's go!"

Ark grinned and rushed forward with Deimos.

"Eyes of the Cat!"

He spent 2 weeks in the ice cave. During that time, he's killed thousands of mongooses. Every time he killed 100 of the same monsters, he received an addition

5% on the special effect of Eyes of the Cat. After hunting thousands of them, the probability of the enemy's attack being foretold by 'Line Designation' was 70%. When the mongoose lifted its arm, a solid red line appeared on Ark's chest like a laser. Ark instantly turned his body and the mongoose's arm shot past him. He also brought down his sword at the same time and dealt a critical hit, cutting off the arm.

"Yes, it's a success!"

He had cut off a part of the enemy's body. It was a new skill he learned after 'Drastic Measures' reached intermediate. It was possible to instantly kill them when the enemy was in a critical condition! Furthermore, the amount of experience and probability of dropping a magic item increased by 1.2. Once he levelled the skill then wouldn't he receive even more experience and items? It was indeed a rare skill that could only be learnt with a two-handed sword. Ark couldn't miss the opportunity. After that, Ark kept on trying to use Drastic Measures whenever a mongoose was in a critical condition. But the probability of success wasn't high and it was a difficult skill to grow.

'But I have 60 skill points!'

Ark invested 40 of the 60 skill points and raised 'Drastic Measures' to intermediate.

Drastic Measures — Sword cutting into two (Intermediate, Passive 100/300): When using this technique, your blade has become sharper. The probability of cutting two pieces at once has risen.

<If you succeed in a critical hit when the enemy has less than 10% health left, there is a 15% probability of instantly killing the enemy. If you are successful then there is a x1.4 chance of gaining extra experience and a x1.4 of the best items dropping. Rare skill only available for two-handed swords>

* Additional effect (Cutting): If you target a part of the enemy's body and succeed in a critical hit, there is a 5% chance of cutting it off.

There was an additional cutting effect! If he cut off the arms or legs then he could slow their movements. Obviously it required a lot of concentration to target a particular part and land a critical hit. But because it was so difficult, he felt a tremendous pleasure when he succeeded.

"Now, let's get started?"

The 3 mongooses weren't even considered as snacks to Ark. Ark began to practice cutting off parts using the mongooses. While some mongooses had 50% health left, all their limbs were cut off so they were unable to fight.

"Ugh, Master. You're becoming increasingly cruel."

Dedric was appalled as he looked at the mongooses from a distance. Ark was being a bit cruel, but didn't he need practice in order to use the skill properly?

So Ark literally sliced the mongooses to pieces.

"That's it. I got everything I need so let's go back to the hideout."

Ark packed the items and leisurely walked back to the cave's entrance.

-You have returned to the camp.

<Health and mana regeneration increases by 50%. There is a 50% less chance of monsters attacking. Your body temperature will start to climb because of the campfire>

Ark had completely adapted to life in an ice cave. The first thing he did was make a camp in the cave. It was necessary to create a safe place since he couldn't release his summons. So he gathered some vines and used it as fuel. Of course it wasn't simple to light a fire using just that. He didn't have a flint, so he had to create friction the old fashioned way and rubbed two sticks together for a while before he could get some embers for the fire. Once he lit a fire and used the camping skill, a campsite was immediately created. Monsters kept away from it once the camp was created. Furthermore, the campfire restored his health and body temperature so it was possible to relax. So Ark used the campsite as a base to attack the cave.

"Ah, it's warm. I was starting to get cold....."

Ssak ssak ssak. Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack.

His summons flocked to the fire as soon as they reached the campsite.

“Fortunately there is still a spark burning. Dedric, gather a lot of vines while I revive the fire a little.”

“Yes, yes, always giving orders. Sheesh, I get the bad jobs as usual.”

Dedric complained but quickly gathered the vines to revive the fire.

“Then I’ll start taking out the items.”

Ark walked towards a corner of the camp. After spending 2 weeks in the ice cave, the campsite had already become like a house. After crossing through the red wilderness, Ark’s bag had become nearly full. Since he also lived here for 2 weeks, he had long exceeded the capacity of his bag. But his pride wouldn’t allow him to give up on the japtem that fell. So his campsite was used as a temporary item storage.

“I’ve gathered quite a lot in the meantime.”

The Seolmocho, Icecap’s Decisions, Mongoose leather and bones, cooked dishes.....these items were piled up like a mountain. It was a sight that warmed his heart whenever he saw it. However, Ark sighed and his face became gloomy.

“The amount I can carry out of the ice caves is only what my bag can hold. No matter how much I gather, more than half of it will eventually be gone.”

Even if the leather and bones could be sold together, he would only get a few gold. But tears clouded his eyes at the thought of throwing it away.

“I have to be reasonable and pick the ones that will earn a little bit more money. Anyway, I’ll worry about it once my business here ends.....”

Ark searched among the pile of items for some ingredients. It was the ingredients needed to create the immortality pill. While his summons played around, Ark finished the mixing and crystallization stages.

“Now, I’ll leave you guys while I take a short nap. Eat the food and don’t let the fire go out.”

“Okay, stop nagging me.”

10 hours later, Ark came back to the ice cave.

“Master, it is finished.”

Dedric approached him holding the pot. Inside the pot was a black immortality pill that let out a mysterious fragrance. When Ark swallowed it, an information window appeared.

Mongoose's Immortality Pill (Darkness) (Immortality Pill rating: D, Degree of Completion: A)

The immortality pill is enchanted with the special attribute of the mongoose that lived in a special environment. You have been granted the ability of the mongoose.

<All stats +3, Dark Attribute Resistance +25%>

*There is an added bonus according to the degree of completion.

<Spiritual Power +100>

Compared to Slime's Immortality Pill, this was the only effect the mongoose pill gave. When he first ate 'Mongoose's Immortality Pill,' Ark could not hide his disappointment. But he soon realized that it was not a small bonus. Although the Mongoose's Immortality Pill only had a D rating, it was still an immortality pill. In other words, he would receive the bonus 7 times.

"Every immortality pill gives me 3 extra stats. That is an 18 stat bonus. Then multiply it by 7....."

Wouldn't he receive 126 stat points? He would also get a bonus for the Degree of Completion. Until now, it had been bonus stats like strength and agility. Due to the immortality pills, his stats increased tremendously.

'This time it is a Spiritual Power bonus! That means I can summon Dedric and Deimos at the same time!'

Although it was impossible to summon or release at the moment, it will become very useful once he returned to middle earth. And there was a necessary bonus as well. His resistance increased according to the attribute! Once Ark ate the pill with a fire attribute, he thought of a way to defeat Galgashi. The red immortality pill gave him 25% fire resistance. In other words, the other pills will increase his resistance according to their attributes. If he ate all 7 kinds then his resistance would increase by 25%.

'It was difficult to deal with Galgashi because of its magic. But I didn't receive an abnormal state when it used fire magic. That was because the Veil of Fire has a 50% fire resistance. If my resistance increases then it might make dealing with the effects from Galgashi's magic easier.'

When affected by a magic state, it was difficult to avoid any attacks. But those magic states could be invalidated by increasing the resistance to an attribute. It meant that he had to eat all the immortality pills to defeat Galgashi!

“Immortality Pill information window!”

Mongoose’s Immortality Pill (Fire) (Immortality Pill rating: D, Degree of Completion: A)

<All stats +3, Fire Attribute Resistance +25%>

* Completion bonus: Strength + 10

[Mongoose’s Immortality Pill (Ice) (Immortality Pill rating: D, Degree of Completion: A)

<All stats +3, Ice Attribute Resistance +25%>

* Completion bonus: Intelligence + 10

[Mongoose’s Immortality Pill (Earth) (Immortality Pill rating: D, Degree of Completion: A)

<All stats +3, Earth Attribute Resistance +25%>

* Completion bonus: Stamina + 10

[Mongoose’s Immortality Pill (Wind) (Immortality Pill rating: D, Degree of Completion: A)

<All stats +3, Wind Attribute Resistance +25%>

* Completion bonus: Agility + 10

[Mongoose’s Immortality Pill (Lightning) (Immortality Pill rating: D, Degree of Completion: A)

<All stats +3, Lightning Attribute Resistance +25%>

* Completion bonus: Wisdom + 10

[Mongoose’s Immortality Pill (Darkness) (Immortality Pill rating: D, Degree of Completion: A)

<All stats +3, Dark Attribute Resistance +25%>

* Completion bonus: Spiritual Power + 100

When he made them appear all at once, it seemed sufficient. But how did he end up obtained 176 stat points? Every time he ate an immortality pill, an extra association bonus was applied and he received an extra 30 intelligence, fame + 1,200 and his Survival Cooking skill increased to 55. Therefore the effect of the immortality pills increased his level by 18~29. His level also increased dramatically while fighting the mongooses.

Ark was level 200 when he first entered the ice cave. The mongooses were level 250. Because 10% experience was added every 5 levels, he earned more than 100% experience when hunting. He also used the Drastic Measures skill so sometimes his experience increased by 1.4. Therefore Ark's current level was 227! When he applied the darkness attribute bonus, it was 317.....that meant he had a little leeway to play around with the mongooses and practice Drastic Measures.

The ingredients in the cave also increased his summons to level 120. It was a really crazy growth rate!

'How much would I get if I could mass produce these immortality pills?'

But even though he had lived in the ice cave for 2 weeks, he still hadn't found the mongoose with red fur again. It seemed like the respawn rate of the special monsters was as slow as a boss monster. In addition, the ice cave was the only place he could find the mongooses but there were thousands of crevasses underneath East Moon. There wasn't a signpost so he wouldn't be able to find the cave again after he left.

"Anyway, I have to leave here soon."

Even though it was a good hunting ground, he couldn't stay here forever. When there was still a level difference with the mongooses, he received an experience bonus of 40% but now his experience didn't go up as quickly as before. And he wouldn't be able to obtain all the items here, no matter how much he wanted to.

"All that's left is the Light attribute Immortality Pill."

But he could already guess which monster had this attribute. Ark had used his cartography skill to make a map of the dungeon. While exploring the cave, his map was now at 99% completion. The remaining 1% was the behind the ice wall where the boss was. So it seemed like he had caught all the mongooses except for the boss. But he still had one attribute missing.

'The Light attribute Immortality Pill must be with the boss. It might be one of the beads embedded in its forehead. Okay, let's complete the collection and leave the ice cave!'

Ark began preparing for the fight against Galgashi. He used 'Magic Restoration' to repair his equipment and 'Blade Maintenance' to increase the damage of his sword. He also used purified water while washing his clothes to increase the defense. After filling his belly, he finally got out of his seat.

"Character Attributes Information Window!"

Character Name	Ark	Race	Human
Alignment		Good +350	
Fame	8,875 (+500)	Level	227
Profession		Dark Walker	
Title		Cat Knight, Caretaker of the Battlefield, Jackson's Hero, Great Adventurer	
Health	3,580 (+150)	Mana	3,745
Spiritual Power	200	Strength	437 (+28)
Agility	587 (+35)	Stamina	667 (+20)
Wisdom	81 (+10)	Intelligence	720
Luck	87 (+30)	Flexibility	92
Art of Communication	46	Affection	109 (+10)
Resilience	254		
Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics		138	
<Character's Overall Combat Power (Item and Skill values added)>			
[Health Regeneration]: 100 (Amulet of Vitality +5 health every 10 seconds)			
[Mana Regeneration]: 100 (Resurrecting Spirit + 5%)			
[Attack]: 110-122 (Advance Sword-Hand Combat +40%)			

[Defense]: 292 (Adelaine's Necklace + 40, King's set + 20)

[Attack Speed]: 146 (Cat Paws + 10%, Wind Spirit's Boots + 10%)

[Reaction Rate]: 293

[Movement Speed]: 100 (Wind Spirit's Boots +30%)

[Critical Hit Success]: 337 (Cat Paws + 10%)

[Evasion Success]: 184

<Character's Resistance (Item and Skill values added)>

* Elemental Series Resistance

[Flame resistance]: 25% (Veil of Fire + 50%)

[Ice resistance]: 25%

[Earth resistance]: 25%

[Wind resistance]: 25%

[Lightning resistance]: 25%

[Dark resistance]: 25% (Profession characteristics +50%)

* Spirit Series Resistance

[Fear resistance]: 50%

[Confusion resistance]: 50%

[Bewitchment resistance]: 50%

* Nature Series Resistance

[Poison Resistance]: 20%

* Environmental resistance

[Water resistance]: 0 (Guardian Armour of the Merpeople+100%)

[Cold resistance]: 16%

* Other resistance

[Shock Absorption]: 20%

[Blunt Force Resistance]: 0 (Resilience +25%, 4%)

[Fall resistance]: 50%~80%

The attribute information window could confirm the combat power of the character. When he levels up then the numbers didn't change that significantly. But since he hadn't checked it in a while, he was able to confirm that it had grown steadily. However, he wanted to confirm the elemental series resistance. The numerical value was necessary to determine if he could fight against Galgashi who used magic freely.

Galgashi's magic is not that high ranking. The problem is the abnormal states. But a 25% resistance can defend against most states.'

"Okay, now it is time to get revenge!"

Ark led his summons and turned towards the boss room.

Ark leisurely traversed the ice cave. Now it wasn't easy to find a mongoose in the cave. That's why Ark was determined to leave. Once the gap had widened between him and the mongoose, his gains had started to slow down. And he used a lot of time hunting the mongooses.

"Well, it doesn't really matter if I leave once I defeat the boss."

Ark soon arrived at the place where Galgashi was waiting.

Keuaaaaang!

-The nightmare boss monster of the East Moon 'Galgashi' has appeared.

There was a ringing noise as the message window once again appeared. Galgashi was fiercely jumping about the room. In these 2 weeks, Ark had become stronger. But Galgashi had just been playing around. It didn't increase its level or develop new attack patterns.

"Eat this! Dark Blade!"

Ark forcefully stabbed it with his sword and then used 'Slide' to retreat. Chiing, there was a ringing sword and Galgashi slipped on the ice. Galgashi stared at Ark and started baring its fangs. The eerie red eyes became cold. But Ark just stared at the eye on its forehead.

'That's it, that's where the light attribute immortality pill is!'

Ark looked at the bead imbedded in the forehead with blazing eyes. Then Galgashi stepped backwards at his face.

"Huhuhu, it's too late. I'll dig out the ball stuck on your forehead. Go, Dedric, Deimos!"

"Take this!"

Clack clack clack clack!

The earlier part of the battle was similar to before. Dedric attacked from above while Galgashi jumped and roared. Then Ark and Deimos waited until it landed before bombarding it with attacks. However, this time Ark was concentrated on one point on Galgashi's body.

'If that guy uses its magic, it'll still be annoying even if the resistance has increased. Deimos and Dedric have no elemental resistance so I'll have to take care of it first.'

Ark didn't blindly decrease Galgashi's health. The previous time Galgashi only used its magic when its health was less than 50%. In other words, it won't use magic until its health falls below 50%.

'I'll have to succeed before Galgashi uses its magic!'

Ark used 'Slide' to go around and attack the tails. After a dozen attempts, one tail was finally cut off. He used the cutting ability of Drastic Measures. The tail that he severed was the tail that could use wind magic. Now the weapon threatening Dedric had disappeared.

'Okay, I'll aim for the Earth magic tail next!'

Ark set his next target and concentrated his attacks again. The damage and abnormal state of the earth magic was not important. It was annoying because it could raise Galgashi's defense.

Seokeok, seokeok, chiing, seokeok, chiing!

Dedric and Deimos distracted Galgashi while Ark used Slide to move around it and attacked the tails. At first it was difficult, but once he got used to the movements then the success probability increased.

Bang!

In the end another tail was cut off. Galgashi stumbled from the pain and rolled away on the floor.

"Hahahah, isn't this exciting?"

Once two tails were cut off, Galgashi started to earnestly use its magic. Ark tensed up and grasped his sword firmly.

'The real fight is from now on!'

Once Galgashi shook its tail, the ground turned a deep blue and sparks flew. But Ark deliberating stood still and let the sparks hit him.

'I have to check to see if I'm right!'

-You have received lightning damage. 75 damage!

<You have resisted 'Electric Shock' thanks to your lightning resistance>

'Yes!'

A satisfied smile appeared on Ark's face. His lowest resistance of 25% worked against Galgashi's magic. In fact, Ark had been inwardly anxious since it was only 25%. His resistance was relatively low. While Ark's Sword-Hand Combat relied on strength and agility, magic also increased because of skills or weapons. In other words, if the opponent had a skill that boosted spell damage by 200% then he would still receive 175% damage, even with 25% resistance. In fact, magicians actually used skills like 'Amplification' while increased basic damage by 200% and applied it to skills like 'Explosion.' It would be 300~500% effective. In addition, the elemental series was the most common kind of magic used. If the magician also had resistance to physical damage then attacking them wouldn't help. That was the reason why magicians were scary. He wouldn't be assured even if he had 1000% magical

resistance. Indeed, raising a warrior was easy but magicians required more of a balance. Well, let's put that talk aside for the moment.

Anyway, even Ark's lowest resistance was able to completely resist Galgashi's magic. After a couple more tries, Ark confirmed that he could resist 90% of the abnormal states caused.

'Now there is no reason to be scared of the magic. That guy would do more damage to me with physical attacks than magical. But I will be able to face it alone.'

"Dedric, Deimos. Stay out of the magic damage range!"

If his summons stayed and fought then it would just become annoying. Ark dived into the reach of Galgashi's wide area magic. While he received additional damage every 30 seconds, his resistance settled the situation. Ark invalidated all the abnormal states and just swung his sword. Then Galgashi finally noticed that Ark was different from before. He wasn't affected at all by Galgashi's magical assault.

"This foolish fellow, you became aware too late."

Now Galgashi was just like an oversized mongoose. And Ark had spent the last two weeks killing thousands of mongooses. If he closed his eyes then he would be able to predict the mongooses' movements.

"Come, let's finish this. Demonic Opening!"

When he used Demonic Opening, the ghosts' wails shook the ice cave. Gwisal's sword turned black and was immediately plunged into Galgashi's underbelly. Galgashi tried its best to run away but it ended up being stabbed over and over. In the end, Galgashi became bloody and was in a critical condition.

"Now's the important part!"

Ark took a small break to recover his breathing. Galgashi only had 3% health left so it would end in one or two attacks. But he shouldn't carelessly kill it. He had waited 2 weeks to catch this boss monster! He wanted to suck every last drop of oil from Galgashi.

'If I succeed, this is a x1.4 chance of more experience and the best item dropping!'

But his opponent was a boss monster. It wouldn't be easy to find the chance to use Drastic Measures. However, Ark avoided the attacks and held out. After 20 minutes..... Galgashi finally wrapped its body in flames and rushed forward in a desperate attack.

Keuaaaaang!

“It’s now, Sprint!”

Ark ran forward and swung Gwisal’s sword from top to bottom. Galgashi and Ark met in a head on confrontation and a roaring sound rattled the area. And after a moment, Ark moved back. He had pierced the body and split it in half. Galgashi was severed with one stroke!

“Success!”

-Your level has risen.

-Your level has risen.

The messages continuously popped up after Galgashi died. He had defeated a level 400 boss monster while level 227 and gained 7 levels. This was because the x1.4 experience effect was applied. However, Ark was not interested in his level.

“Items, items!”

Ark drooled like a hyena and ran over to Galgashi’s body.

Mongoose Essence (Light)

Galgashi’s Fur (Rare)

Armour type: Mantle

Durability: 13/50

Defense power: 25

Weight: 30

User restriction: Level 180 or more

The fur of a snow demon called Galgashi, it can be cut to a suitable size and wound around the body. While wearing this fur, your body temperature won’t fall regardless of how cold the environment is. The remnants of Galgashi’s magic will also protect you.

<Option: Cold Resistance +100%, Agility +20>

<Special Option: When the wearer's health becomes less than 50%, 'Magic Protection' will activate. When 'Magic Protection' is activated, there is a 10% chance that the opponent will be attacked by one of Fire, Ice, Earth, Wind, Lightning, Darkness or Light>

Galgashi's Claws (Special)

User restriction: Level 180 and more

Item type: Modification (Shoes)

You can attach Galgashi's sharp claws to your shoes.

<Additional Effect of Remodelled Shoes: These sharp claws can be used to dig into the ice and not slip. You can climb an ice wall at 90 degrees for 3 minutes. In addition, users who have mastered Hand-to-Hand Combat and use the claw-equipped when kicking will deal 10~15 additional damage.

* Hover the item over the desired footwear to equip it (Removable)

"Ooh!"

It was worth waiting 20 minutes for Drastic Measures to succeed. Even though the Mongoose Essence was a basic drop, a rare and special item had appeared. The mantle gave him 100% cold resistance! He immediately felt warm after he wore it. In addition, the special option would automatically use a spell. While the magic was not that strong and would be ineffective against a player, it would be quite useful against monsters. And Galgashi's claws also caught Ark's eyes. The items gave new skills and additional attack damage to his shoes. In addition, it was removable so he could wear it with new shoes.

"Hahaha, it was worth coming to a different dimension!"

Ark enthusiastically packed the loot.

"I'll test the performance later so let's make the immortality pill."

Ark took out his pot. Once he killed the boss, it was like Ark owned the ice cave. It was pointless to go back to the entrance just to make the immortality pill.

“Snake, give me the necessary ingredients.”

Ark extended his hand. However, Snake was not at his waist. Once the battle with Galgashi ended, Snake crossed the square as if it was spellbound.

“Eh? Snake, what’s wrong?”

Ssak ssak ssak!

Snake moved and pointed towards the hole in the barrier.

‘Oh, that reminds me.....’

Ark remembered the first time he came to this place. He had found the boss room because of Snake.

‘There might be another item behind the barrier!’

Ark considered this and followed Snake to the barrier. When he entered the hole Galgashi made, a wide space appeared. Then there was a ringing sound and a message window popped up.

-You have finished the map of the ‘Snowy Mountain’s Hidden Ice Cave’ with a 100% completion rate.

It is now possible to sell the ‘Snowy Mountain’s Hidden Ice Cave’ map. <Experience +3,000>

As expected, it was the remaining 1% of his map. However, Ark was puzzled when he saw the space inside.

“What the? Ugh, it is freezing. This is.....a refrigerator?”

Dedric muttered as he followed. It was a very accurate statement. Inside the large icy space, there were all kinds of monster corpses piled up like a mountain. The bones of the corpses were piled on one side while the other side had the half eaten remains left behind from eating. It was similar to beef hanging in a frozen storeroom. No, it was clearly a refrigerator. The mongoose must’ve collected it from hunting in the snowy mountains. Perhaps the reason monsters weren’t seen on the snowy mountains was because of the mongooses.

‘What the? Did Galgashi spend the whole time in here eating?’

Since the passage was too small for Galgashi to leave, it must have spent it all in here. No wonder why it was huge.....

Ssak ssak ssak!

Then he heard Snake's voice inside. Without thinking, Ark moved closer to where Snake was. Snake was wriggling into a place where the corpses of snakes were piled up like a mountain.

'All my questions are answered.'

The mongooses had caught an absurd amount of snakes as food. Snake probably came to the cave because it scented its kin from the cave.

'Wait? Isn't something strange? So far, haven't I hunted a lot of serpents with Snake? There was no reaction at the time so why would it suddenly be so sensitive now?'

When Ark thought about it, something was strange. Then a blurry light suddenly appeared from the pile of dead snakes. Something huge was moving among the pile.

"What, what the? For there to be a monster here.....!"

Ark reflexively took out his sword.

-Unbelievable.....

A distance voice emerged from inside.

-There is still an Alamone alive.....but how is that possible.....?

In the darkness, the thing asked with doubt as it moved about. It was a giant constrictor, much larger than the one he saw on TV crushing its prey. However, the huge snake looked miserable as giant chunks of its flesh was torn out. There was no sense of threat coming from it. Somehow it seemed rather friendly.

-I see, you chose this person.

The huge snake stared at Ark and nodded.

-You don't have to panic. Foreigner, I am not your enemy. My body is already dying. I won't be much of a threat.

But Ark was surprised for a different reason.

"The snake is talking.....?"

-I am not a snake.

“Eh? Then how are you speaking?”

-I am an Alamone. The last remaining Alamone in this world.....or so I thought.

“Alamone!”

Ark burst out with surprise. It made sense.....was Snake drawn by instinct to return to its kin? But there was some doubts remaining.

“I thought the Alamone was extinct?”

That was written in the information window when he met Snake for the first time.

-That's right. The Alamone was very curious and had a habit of collecting things. So the Alamone had always been targeted by other races and became nearly extinct. The Alamone barely avoided the threats and survived, travelling a long way until we finally arrived at East Moon.

The Alamone sighed and replied.

-But this place did not become a haven for us. It was the place where our natural enemy the mongooses lived.....so one by one we were captured by them and used as food. I got trapped in this place by the cursed devil Galgashi and used as a living food source.

The Alamone twitched as it relived the pain.

-When I disappeared, the Alamone clan disappeared from history. But now.....I have met an Alamone descendant after hundreds of years! To the great power that rules this land.....thank you.

The Alamone looked at Snake with a gaze filled with deep emotions.

Ssak ssak ssak!

Snake clung to Ark's legs with a frightened expression. Then it just gawked at the Alamone. Snake had been drawn by instincts, but Snake never thought it would find a relative. Indeed, Snake had been with Ark from the time it hatched. Although Ark was a human, Snake considered him as its parent. But the Alamone just said happily.

-I'm glad that you met someone you could cherish. All Alamones long to find a master that they can serve and love. I can relax and close my eyes now that I've confirmed a descendant of the Alamone still lives!

The Alamone stared at Snake endlessly.

-It looks like he hatched you from an egg. Am I right?

“That’s right.”

-Indeed.....the Alamone seemed strange the first time I saw it.....Like this, the child will be unable to grow into a real Alamone. This is because it could not learn from its parents or siblings.

“Yes? Then.....?”

-Now I know why I’m still alive. I am the only survivor of the clan. Now, please send the child over here.

Ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak!

Snake became frightened and shook its head. However, Ark separated Snake by force and pushed it towards the Alamone. After listening to the words, Ark sensed an opportunity for growth. Although Snake looked uneasy at first, it finally made a decision as small crystals fell from the Alamone’s mouth. Snake became curious and approached the Alamone. When the Alamone nodded, Snake stuck out its tongue and swallowed immediately.

Flash-!

At that moment, Snake’s body bent and there was an intense light. Then Snake’s skin started to crack apart like a shell.

The Alamone Larvae has successfully completed its growth.

The last survivor of the Alamone clan has given Snake the knowledge to grow. The crystals contained a part of the experience and knowledge of the Alamone. The Alamone has evolved into an adult by absorbing this knowledge. By becoming an adult snake, the Alamone is able to obtain one additional skill. Under the will of the Netherworld, the adult snake has been granted the name ‘Radun.’

Radun

Snake has absorbed the knowledge of an adult Alamone survivor. It has fully manifested as an adult Alamone called Radun. It can store more items and many skills can be used freely. Once more experience and knowledge is accumulated, it

will learn the skills instinctively.

Species: Netherworld Creature

Alignment: Dark

Ranking: Adult

Health: 1,000

Loyalty: –

Strength:-

Agility:-

Stamina:-

Wisdom:-

Intelligence:-

Luck:-

* The equipped skills slot has expanded to 2.

* Item storage capacity is doubled.

* It is possible for Radun to transform.

Radunma: For a certain period of time, Radun can transform into a mount called Radunma. Radunma is able to move as fast as the wind while still keeping its ability for item storage. However, in order to maintain Radunma's body who will become hungry after transforming, 5 mana is consumed every 10 seconds.

* Radunma's health once transformed: 2,000

* Player's movement speed when mounted on Radunma +500%

* Attack and Defense of player will increase by 10% when mounted on Radunma.

'Huk! Radunma? A mount?'

Ark's eyes widened at the sight of the information window. He didn't have that many expectations about Snake's growth. He would be grateful even if the bag storage expanded a little bit. Since Snake only had 1 skill slot, he had been unable to utilize the poison skill properly. But now that problem had disappeared. Two skill

slots! Double the bag space! This meant that he could use the item storage along with the poison skill. But what was even more marvellous was the Radunma skill. Now Ark also had a mount! It could also be used in combat, instead of only transportation like the Unicorn. He got a mount normally worth thousands of gold for free!

-The descendant of the Alamone has been seen again after hundreds of years. Maybe a king of the Alamone might even be born again. Then the Alamone clan would rise again. Foreigner, please take care of this child until the end.....

The Alamone closed its eyes for the last time.

Ssak ssak ssak? Ssak ssak ssak!

Radun had finally begun to consider the Alamone family so it cried sadly. Now it really was the last survivor of the Alamone clan.

Mongoose's Immortality Pill (Light) (Immortality Pill rating: D, Degree of Completion: A)

<All stats +3, Light Attribute Resistance +50%>

* Completion bonus: Luck + 10

Ark finally swallowed the last Mongoose pill. Suddenly he felt a cold feeling and he sank heavily to the ground.....Fire, Ice, Wind, Earth, Lightning, Darkness and Light all started fighting. After a moment, he sat quietly and stared at the information window in front of him.

The Mongoose Attributes Set has been completed!

The immortality pills have harmonized in your body and a new skill has been awakened. You can choose one of two skills.

1. 7 Attributes Fusion: It is possible to fuse the 7 attributes and increase your body's stats dramatically. <If you select Fusion, a bonus 20 points will be applied to all your stats>
2. 7 Attributes Balance: It is possible to maintain the 7 attributes and use its power when needed. <If you choose balance, a Fire, Ice, Wind, Earth or Lightning attribute can be applied to your sword to form an 'Elemental Sword.' You can also learn the skill 'Shadow' thanks to the Darkness and Light attribute immortality pill>

'Ugh! W-what is this?'

Ark looked at the information window with a gaping mouth. The bonus for completing the set was more than he expected. However, he could only pick one bonus. Either receive bonus stats or learn 2 new skills.....

‘Damn.....why did it show me.....ugh, what should I select?’

A bonus 20 points to all stats! That was 120 extra stats. He would be able to climb 12 levels with just the bonus stats alone. Naturally he would drool.....no, the bonus was so remarkable that he would freak out over it! But that would mean throwing away the chance to learn 2 special skills.

“Dammit, this is torture!”

Ark pulled his hair and shouted. It was as if someone has shown Ark two children drowning in the sea and asked him to save only one of them. But standing around tearing his hair out was useless. Ark was tortured for a while before he made a decision with tears in his eyes.

‘Yes, I collected a lot of bonus stat points from the immortality pills anyway. And chances are that I can continue to receive bonus stats. But I might never learn these special skills again!’

Hadn’t he seen how useful the Slime’s Time that he got from the Slime’s Immortality Pill was? He couldn’t give up the chance to learn these skills because of some bonus stats.

“Okay, the 7 Attributes Balance!”

When Ark raised his voice, the 7 attributes started spinning around and scattered to every corner of his body. Then a new skill window floated in front of him.

Elemental Sword (Special, Active): It is possible to temporarily imbue your sword with one of the five properties Fire, Ice, Earth, Wind and Lightning. Once the sword has been imbued with the attribute, it will afflict additional damage and an abnormal state to the enemy. But if you’re not a magician who deals with elements, you can draw out all the elemental power dwelling in your body for a period of time before becoming extremely vulnerable.

<You can imbue your weapon with an attribute in exchange for lowering your resistance to it by 100% for 24 hours. (It isn’t possible to imbue an attribute to our weapon if the resistance is in a ‘minus’ state)

Once your weapon is imbued, the damage increases by 10% for 30 minutes. A critical hit will also activate an abnormal state. But the nature of the additional damage will

depend on the enemy (When used on an enemy with the same attribute, damage=20%. When used on an enemy with the opposite attribute, damage +20%)

Mana consumption: 300 >

Hiding in Shadows (Special, Passive): You can use 'Stealth' if there is any shadowy place in the daytime.

However, you can't use it when you're in a battle state and it will be released if you touch sunlight.

'Elemental Sword increases my damage by 10%! And I can hide in shadow! Okay, this is good!'

Ark had been anxious looking at the information window and now he sighed with relief. Fortunately, the 'Elemental Sword' and 'Hiding in Shadows' was worth giving up the bonus stats. He was especially pleased with Elemental Sword. It raised his attack power by 10%, depending on the resistance. Also, a critical hit will also give an attribute related state! Since it was a strong skill, of course it would have a penalty. After giving the attribute to his weapon, his related resistance will decrease by 100%. For example, his ice resistance was 25% so he would have -75% ice resistance for 24 hours. In other words, he would be especially vulnerable to ice magic for 24 hours.

'But if I'm dealing with an enemy who uses ice attacks then I just won't use that attribute. I'll use the fire attribute and have my fire resistance fall instead. I can restore my resistance after 24 hours.....if I pay attention when using it then it shouldn't be a problem.'

Ark nodded with a satisfied face. After a life and death situation in the snowy mountains, he had found a hidden dungeon! And he spent two weeks grinding there! The rewards were indeed worth it.

Snake evolved into Radun and he received an enormous bonus for completing the immortality pill set. There was also Elemental Sword which added magic properties to his sword and 'Hiding in Shadows' which allowed him to use Stealth in daytime! He felt breathless after fully repeating everything he received.

'It really is a huge bonus!'

He received all these compensations after entering the new dimension. And there were still more quests and compensation waiting. Because only 10 people had found this place, it wasn't an exaggeration to say that the possibilities were endless.

"Now, should I start exploring this dimension?"

Ark grinned and pulled out the claws. He placed in on his shoes and stepped firmly on the ground. It was the shoe modification item, Galgashi's Claws. He had been worried about how he would leave the crevasse after defeating Galgashi. Even though he had explored the entire huge cave, the crevasses were like a maze and the whole area apart from the dungeon was dark on his map. But Galgashi's claws had neatly solved that problem.

"Radun, pick up all the items until you're full!"

Ssak ssak ssak!

Radun used its tongue to swallow the items at the campsite. Although its capacity had doubled, it wasn't possible to swallow everything gathered.

"They're all worth some money but it can't be helped. Deimos, transform!"

Ark made Deimos transform into the saw blade. After stretching his body, he ran towards the ice wall.

"Sprint!"

Pak, pak, pak, pak!

Galgashi's Claws made it easy to dig into the ice. Then he began to climb up the sheer 90 degrees wall. The duration of climbing with Galgashi's Claws was 3 minutes. But since he didn't rest and used Sprint, Ark managed to climb up in 2 minutes.

"Achoo, c-cold.....!"

Once he was on the snowy mountain again, the tremendous chill immediately began. Dedric screamed and quickly hid in Ark's mantle.

"Oh, this is paradise!"

"Radun, Radunma transform!"

When he used the skill, Radun's body began to swell. Although Radun wasn't as big as the Alamone in the refrigerator, it reached the size of a pony. Radun also grew 4 legs in its chest and legs. Its transformation looked like a large lizard.

"Now let's go down. It is time to explore the new dimension!"

Ark got on Radunma while wearing Galgashi's Fur and shouted.

Pa pa pa pa!

Radun moved its four legs and ran down the snowfields. While the stubby legs looked funny, it was faster than it seemed. Therefore, Ark and his summons broke through the snow storm and crossed East Moon. After a few hours, the snow storm gradually disappeared and he arrived at a wide plain.

This was the real beginning of his expedition.

Act 5: Different World? Netherworld?

Translator Notes: Based on this chapter, it seems that once the door to the dimension is opened, it stays opened and other people can go through without the key.

"Now there's a little bit more money to spare."

Raiden leaned back in his chair and let out a long sigh. He had been the Lord for 3 weeks. It had been a terrible time. There was 0 gold in the castle's public funds. In addition, Ark had given all the public funds to the residents of the castle inside of fixing the infrastructure. Therefore the estate was already on the verge of bankruptcy when Raiden became the Lord.

'That Ark bastard.....!'

Raiden snarled as he recalled how Ark had fooled them. However, he couldn't go tear Ark apart. Although he wanted to chase after Ark, he was still the Lord of Silvana. If he left it as it was, the infrastructure would be inoperable and half the territory seized by the government. In the end, Raiden had to raise the taxes to prevent this from happening. Then the residents started complaining.

"The previous Lord gave us a bonus for completing the trading post. But this one raised the taxes as soon as he became the Lord! Isn't it terrible?"

"Why are they so different when it comes to money management?"

"We're not going to be the slaves of the Lord!"

"If he continues treating us like this then I won't endure it anymore!"

'God dammit, I have to raise the taxes because of the former Lord!'

Raiden inwardly screamed. How on earth was he supposed to rectify what Ark did? Because of that, Raiden needed to raise the taxes. Yet he received unfair abuse and complaints from the residents until he was almost in tears. But he didn't dare tell the residents that. No, he knew that the NPCs didn't consider him that highly based on Berami's attitude.

"It's difficult. If this continues then there really might be an uprising."

In New World, the 'rebellion' system also existed. If he raised taxes too quickly or mishandled the infrastructure, his intimacy with the residents would fall. And once the intimacy fell below a certain amount, the residents would start to rebel. If he experienced a rebellion then it would be a serious issue. He couldn't collect taxes while quelling the rebellion. But if he didn't quell the rebellion then his estate would be in anarchy. If that happened then other guilds would be able to attack the castle without going through a formal siege. If other guilds flocked like bees towards Hermes, there was no guarantee that they could defend the castle. Eventually Raiden had no choice but to lower the taxes after a few days. But the immediate problem wasn't the necessary funds. Raiden received information that the Grey Wings guild had bought the challenge rights and would siege the castle next.

'Hang in there. It will be the end if I lose the castle!'

He had barely obtained the castle after paying Ark 4,000 gold and rare shoes. But was that all? In order to maintain the estate, he had to clean out all his savings and sold his car. If he lost the castle then he would vomit in a vase. In addition, it was obvious that Hermes was having some problems. Raiden had to shake up the guild members for money to repair the castle walls and defense towers. Fortunately, he was able to repel the Grey Wings' attack. And after 10 days had passed, Raiden could finally take a break. The tax was lowered, the urgent funding issues solved and the Grey Wings' power had weakened thanks to the failed siege. Of course there were numerous guilds in Silvana, but none of them were a threat except for the Grey Wings.

So after 20 days, the area finally managed to become moderately stable. But he had only barely managed to enter the safety zone.

“3 weeks! I poured a considerable amount of money into this estate during those 3 weeks!”

His anger rose again once he managed to rest. He didn't receive any profits in those 3 weeks, only debt.

“That Ark bastard, I can't forgive him for what he did!”

“Of course!”

Duke also exclaimed.

“When I think about how my shoes were stolen by that guy.....”

Duke looked down at his leather shoes. Raiden had promised that he would buy better shoes after he became the Lord. However, Raiden was in a crisis situation where he had to sell his car to raise some money. In this situation, the guild couldn't afford to buy Duke new shoes. Thanks to that, Duke was wearing shoes sold in shops. Although the shoes Raiden bought as an apology were still quite expensive, they couldn't compare to his rare shoes.

“Recently the castle is operating on track. But we had to sacrifice so much to reach this point. And all this trouble was because of Ark. I can never forgive him!”

“I agree!”

The guild members shouted in unison.

“He deliberately tricked us.”

“That Ark will see that he can't just mess around with the Hermes guild.”

“If I ever encounter him, I won't be able to sleep until I've killed him many times.”

“But do we know where he is hiding?”

The guild members became gloomy at those words.

“He's not an idiot and he would've already ran far away.”

“What if he crossed the border and entered another kingdom?”

"You don't have to worry."

Then Jewel interrupted with a confident face.

"Do you think I would've obediently handed him Duke's shoes?"

"What do you mean?"

"Before handing over the shoes I used 'Mana Perfume' on it."

"Mana Perfume?"

Jewel grinned and explained about Mana Perfume. Mana Perfume was an exclusive skill of Jewel's class that could detect traces of mana left by a curse engraved on the item. If she used Mana Perfume and tracked it using 'Memory of Perfume' then Jewel would be able to track the item no matter the location. Of course, this curse didn't appear in the information window. Since the item didn't change while under the curse, it wasn't easy for a user to distinguish. Jewel's Mana Perfume was still an unknown skill. So a user wouldn't notice anything strange even if they checked the item again. In fact, Mana Perfume was a curse a magician created after he got robbed by a chaotic player. Jewel used the curse and then handed the shoes to Ark. Jewel had a hostile relationship with Ark and saw a chance for revenge.

"It is possible to find him wherever he is in the game."

".....Then it's decided."

A bloody smile flashed on Duke's mouth.

"I'll teach him what it means to antagonize a pioneer."

"I'll regain my shoes."

Raiden thought of something and unfolded his arms.

"The remaining question is who will go. It won't be safe if Jewel tracks him alone.....Duke?"

"Of course. I'm going no matter what."

Duke growled and replied. Raiden judged that he couldn't be stopped and nodded.

"Okay. But I still can't be relieved with just two people. He also has his colleagues in Dark Eden. The war has ended so the NPC mercenaries won't be with him anymore. So he'll probably have 10 users with him."

Raiden thought for a moment before nodding again.

“But I can’t just gather an excessive crowd to hunt Ark. Although the crisis has been handled, I can’t just assume that the situation is stable yet. Therefore I’ll ask for some pioneers outside Hermes to help Jewel and Duke.”

“Will the other pioneers listen to Raiden’s command?”

Yes, the Hermes guild had 30 pioneers. Naturally they didn’t have all the pioneers. There were hundreds of users called pioneers. And a number of the pioneers had superior skills and levels compared to Duke, Jewel and Raiden. Although Jewel and Duke were pioneers, they were only in the intermediate rank of pioneers. But most of the other pioneers went around high level hunting grounds by themselves and didn’t attract any attention. However, there were several pioneers that Raiden was acquaintance with and regularly kept in contact. And if they joined Duke and Jewel than 10 opponents would be nothing. No, even 20~30 enemies wouldn’t matter. Then Jewel snorted and said.

“They’re not necessary to beat Ark. I’m not going to just sit down and wait for them. That Ark bastard won’t be a match for me and Duke. And those other guys that he gathered are only low level. Bringing a bunch of low level members from our guild will be enough to take care of them. The lower ranking members in our guild are not that weak.”

“Gathering the lower level members.....is that okay?”

“What do you mean? They’re more than enough against Ark.”

Jewel replied with a trivial laugh. Indeed, most of the Hermes guild had recently passed level 200. Excluding the pioneers, even the lower ranked guild members had an average level of 180~190. It wasn’t a standard to be worried about.

“Okay, although it is not necessary, that Ark had made an enemy of the Hermes guild. If possible, I would like to use our strength to get revenge. Duke, Jewel. I’ll give you 8 guild members so go and destroy him.”

“I understand.”

Therefore Jewel and Duke along with their guild members started to track Ark. After a few days, they arrived at the cabin in the red wilderness.

“The mana trail leads inside this picture.”

Jewel said, pointing to a picture on one side of the cabin. Then a guild member investigated the picture and said.

“This is a gate. The gate leads to a place pretty far away. And judging by the mana pattern, it is a one-way movement. I’m slightly uncomfortable.....what should we do?”

“Is it even necessary to answer?”

Duke plunged into the picture without any hesitation.

“We’re going to stab Ark to death. So we have to follow no matter what.”

“Our journey for revenge won’t end until he dies.”

“Okay, let’s go!”

Jewel and the rest of the guild entered the picture. So once again a group of foreigners headed towards the other dimension.

“What the hell, this is?”

At that moment, Ark was looking around with a stupid face. In fact, he hadn’t felt like he was in a different dimension while wandering the snowy mountains. No, he had been too busy trying not to freeze to death to question it. After he left the snowy mountains, he finally realized that the world was completely different.

“Just before it was snowing but now it is a heat wave?”

The weather was the most amazing thing in this world. After leaving the snowy mountains, he encountered a wilderness with sweltering heat. But after a moment, the sky became dark and it started pouring with rain. Then a cold wind starting blowing and hail began falling from the sky.

“What crazy weather.....”

The weather was not the only thing hard to adapt to. The surrounding terrain was also strange. The trees in the forest were all made of stone, the desert consisted of iron powder, the river seemed dyed in multi-coloured paints and the sky kept on going round and round. He became even more confused when a flower garden started laughing. He felt like he had travelled into the mind of a person with a mental disorder. The monsters were also weird. There were monsters that would ambush from the sand and there were also ghosts wandering in broad daylight that could not be harmed by normal swords.....it was all monsters he never heard of before.

Kaaaaaaa-

Now, there was a group of monsters resembling a stingray flying above his head. It was enough to make him dizzy. In addition, the monsters in this dimension were much stronger. Their abilities were quite high and they would often use unique skills that made the fight difficult. If it was in the past then he would've struggled. But Ark had greatly raised his abilities in the snowy mountains and passed through the wilderness without any difficulties.

"I'm finally accustomed to this landscape."

Ark was thinking that when something interrupted.

Ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak!

Radun's legs that had been busy moving suddenly slowed down.

"It is already this time? Stop Radun."

Radun slowed its pace and stopped. Then it contracted like a balloon after Ark got off its back.

"You cutie, you must have suffered."

Ark stroked its head and murmured as Radun's eyes lit up. His travel speed increased dramatically thanks to Radun transforming to Radunma. But it couldn't be used without restriction like a normal mount. Radunma consumed 5 mana every 10 seconds until it ran out. Ark had 3000 mana so they had to take a break approximately every hour. In addition, Radunma consumed a tremendous amount of energy and needed 4~5 servings of food to recover. However, these downsides were no problem. While Ark's bag had no empty spaces, he had gathered a lot of ingredients in the snowy mountains and had a surplus of ingredients.

"Well let's rest here for the moment."

Ark started building a campsite. He instantly made 5 servings of food using a variety of ingredients and spices.

“Eat, and tell me if you need more.”

Ssak ssak ssak? Ssak ssak.....

Radun swallowed its saliva and looked up at Ark. The look in its eyes indicated that Radun felt sorry for increasing the food expenses.

“It’s okay. You’ve done enough to eat as much as you like.”

Finally Radun began to wave its tail and consumed the food.

Even after growing, Radun was completely loyal to Ark. It was different from Dedric who started behaving badly as soon as he evolved. Therefore he talked to Radun like Roco talked to a puppy. Ark gave it a warm look and took out more ingredients.

“Now, are you guys eating?”

The Dedric began grumbling complaints.

“Sheesh, is this also an experimental food? Damn, you give Radun all the delicious food.....this is favouritism!”

“What’s wrong with new food? It makes you stronger. What more do you want? Are you going to keep complaining about the dishes?”

After Ark shouted, Dedric became frightened and retreated. And then he swelled up like a ball before saying.

“I’ll be delighted to eat that dish!”

“So now you’re happy about eating new dishes?”

“Ey, stop talking.”

Dedric turned his head with a sulky look. In fact, there was a good reason from Dedric’s complaints. While crossing the wilderness in a different dimension, he had seen many ingredients for the first time. Ark cheered because of that but Dedric and Deimos screamed instead. Besides, now the situation was different from before. In the old days, he had to look for a chance before making them eat new dishes. But now there was no free space in his bag. If he wanted to gather new ingredients, Ark had to make space by cooking a dish and forcing them to eat it. Dedric had been hit with bad penalties a few times. But he didn’t dare resist violently now.

There were 3 reasons. The discipline he engrained in them at Lancel Village still hadn't fallen. And Dedric finally knew how precious food was after starving on the snowy mountains. Even eating spoiled food that could cause diarrhoea was better than starving to death. Ark made two different types of dishes and held them out to his summons.

"These are new dishes. Eat them with gratitude.

"Okay, I get it. I'll eat."

Dedric licked the dish and looked relieved before pouring it down his mouth. The last reason Dedric didn't complain severely was because of this. When using ingredients from this dimension, there was a high probability that dishes with good effects would be cooked. Thanks to that, his summons were able to raise their stats to level 130. However, there wasn't a guarantee that there would be a good result. As always, survival cooking was a system that relied on luck!

Clack-! Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack.

Deimos swallowed the food without thinking and trembled.

-Deimos has been struck by a headache!

You have made a 'Rancid Soup' using Survival Cooking. The terrible headache will last for 10 minutes and no action will be able to be performed.

It also gave these types of dishes.

"Hahaha, stupid, you just blindly ate that dish!"

Dedric rolled around laughing. He was acting spiteful.

"Soon it will be his turn and he won't be able to act so spiteful.'

Ark shook his head and laughed.

'But how long will it be until I find a town? No, does this place even have a town?'

Radun had been crossing the huge wilderness for 6 hours. With the 500% movement speed taken into consideration, it was more like 30 hours. But he still hadn't seen a person or a village. Normally it wouldn't be a problem if there were no towns in this dimension. He wanted to dispose of his items, but his main goal was to obtain a clue about Magaro. He didn't want to just blindly walk around the whole dimension.

'The gate on the snowy mountain has closed so I have no choice but to continue.'

“Now the break is finished. Let’s prepare to leave.”

Ark got up and shook off the dust. Suddenly the ground started vibrating before something burst out of the earth and sand in front of him. And a huge monster that looked like a slug emerged. It was nearly 20 meters in size!

“Predator!”

Ark drew his sword and shouted. He had met this monster several times in the wilderness. They were monsters that would hide underground and then emerge to swallow their prey. Level 300. Furthermore, their body emitting acid poison with hundreds of maggots sticking to it. Without the darkness attribute bonus, there was a 70 level difference! But Ark’s face was confident.

“It is good to exercise after a meal.”

Ark had been frightened when he first met a Predator. But after the fight started, it didn’t feel that difficult. The Predator looked like it was moving in slow motion. But he had raised his abilities in the ice cave so much that even a 70 level difference wasn’t that hard.

“Wasn’t this guy weak to fire? Elemental sword, Fire attribute!”

Ark used the skill and flames wrapped around his sword. The black sword spewing flames looked truly spectacular! The penalty occurred at the same time and his fire resistance fell to -75%, but he didn’t have to worry because the monster had an acid attribute.

“Okay, let’s see how fast it can be caught. Go, Dedric, Deimos!”

“Yes, leave it to me!”

Clack clack clack clack!

Dedric and Deimos split up and besieged the Predator from both sides. While the Predator faltered for a moment, Ark quickly approached and swung his sword.

Peng, peng, peng, peng!

After the flames exploded outwards, the Predator flinched and was pushed backwards.

-You have dealt a critical hit with Elemental Sword (Fire).

-The Predator is ‘Burned.’

<It will receive 10 damage every 10 seconds for 1 minute>

Since the Predator was vulnerable to fire, it received 20% more damage. And since he dealt a critical hit with Elemental Sword, it received an abnormal state. The Predator screamed as its body was surrounded by flames.

Roaaaaar!

Then the fight truly started. The hundreds of maggots stuck to the Predator was not a decoration. The maggots turned to his direction and spat. It was the acidic poison. The maggots' poison only did 10 damage to him. But the problem was the number. If one hundred maggots spat at him then he would receive 500 damage. Of course, feeling dirty was also a powerful combat motivation. Anyway, these maggots stuck to the Predator frantically continued spitting. Even a warrior with high defense wouldn't be able to endure for long. But the maggots weren't a problem for Ark.

"Spirit of the Cat!"

Nyahhhh-!

The form of a giant cat with golden eyes appeared and roared. Then the hundreds of maggots stiffened and fell to the ground.

"Dedric, Deimos! Kill all of it!"

"Hehehe, ppok ppok. Ppok ppok ppok.....Ha, this feeling while killing. It is really addictive."

Dedric smirked and happily killed the maggots.

When the maggots were crushed, the Predator shrieked with fury and spat. The maggot's spit couldn't even be compared to the amount that the Predator spat out. If hit, his health and the durability of his armour would decrease. But Ark wouldn't be hit by such a simple attack. He used 'Slide' to move sideways and swung his flaming sword. The predator's slow movements couldn't catch up to Ark and it failed to block the attack. After stabbing it a few times, the Predator quickly reached a critical condition.

"Good, go Sprint!"

Ark shot forward like an arrow and swung his sword. He used Drastic Measures and split the Predator in half. All sorts of odd items as well as a yellow liquid splashed onto the ground. It was the prey the Predator swallowed in the wilderness.

“Ugh.....it ate a lot. Eh? The deceased are also here.”

Ark murmured while wiping off all the filth stuck to his body. Something that looked like a person emerged from the Predator. It looked like the zombies that wandered the wilderness. NPC? Monster? They were ambiguous and all they did was wander around. When he first discovered them, Ark thought they were inhabitants of the dimension. The name was also displayed in blue. Although he tried to speak to them, the dead just wandered around with stupid looking eyes. The souls that hadn't been digested by the Predator just scattered again with stupid looks.

‘Well, they’re just like the background.’

“It didn't seem to have collected any items.”

Ark surveyed the corpse of the Predator and clicked his tongue. Normally he would receive quite a lot of items from the Predator whenever he used Drastic Measures. But most of the japtem were half rotting flesh. They weren't items that he would put in his bag.

“Phew! Where is this? Is this hell? Or Heaven? Ah, is it heaven because I'm so nice? Eh? Isn't this outside? Oh, am I alive? Hahaha, I survived! Out of all the people eaten by a Predator, I must be the first one!”

Ark had been moving away when he suddenly heard laughter from the Predator's body. It was the first time he heard a human voice since coming here! He reflexively turned his head. Then he stared with a foolish expression. Something that looked like it belonged to the cockroach species was emerging from the Predator. When he crept out and looked around, he saw Ark and quickly shook his hand.

“It's you. Isn't it? You're the one who defeated the Predator and saved me?”

“Who are you?”

“Me? Ah, my introduction is late. I am called Reid. I am a proud member of the Galgin clan. Do you know the Galgin? We are peddlers who travel around the country. I came to this land because of my curiosity. I wanted to see it just once. But how did I know that I would be swallowed by a Predator? Hahaha, but I've managed to live.”

‘Galgin clan? Does that mean that several more races live in this dimension?’

But to have a race that looks like a cockroach.....Anyway, it was clear that the talkative cockroach was one of the races that lived in this dimension. He had finally met an NPC after being in the dimension for half a month. Furthermore, didn't his profession mean that he could buy Ark's japtem?

"You said you were a peddler?"

"Yes yes, if you need anything than ask, ah, why didn't I see it? Usually the Galgin family will not trade when there is a possibility of a fraud but I'll strike a good deal for my lifesaver."

Reid untied his bags and pulled out his items. When the dead showed an interest and approached, Reid picked up a stone and threw it.

"Shh, Shh, go to the other side! Damn, stupid things....."

"What are the Dead called?"

"I don't pay attention to such things. They're just idiots. So how about it? Do you like anything?"

"No, I want to sell some items not buy anything."

Reid shook its antennae in confusion.

"Sell? What are you talking about?"

"I want to exchange my items for money."

"Money? What is that?"

Reid seemed to be hearing it for the very first time. Ark took out 1 copper and showed him. But Reid just looked at the copper coin with uninterested eyes.

"Well, that's just a piece of metal. Even if you saved my life, I wouldn't exchange any of these items for that."

"Yes? So you're not selling these things for money?"

"I don't know what money is, but why would I need useless stuff like that?"

Reid naturally retorted. Exchanging items for items. In other words, Reid was talking about a barter system.

Reid was a peddler who went around the dimension trading. Since he didn't understand the concept of money, didn't that mean bartering is the normal system in this dimension? So no matter how much japtem he gathered, there was no method to change it into gold! Ark had expected to be able to exchange japtem for gold and his mood instantly became dark.

"I'm screwed. How will bartering help reduce my bag capacity? Do I have to keep on carrying around japtem? No, there might be something I don't know."

Ark thought for a moment before something else popped in his head. What if he managed to exchange a few garbage items for expensive ones? If he kept on doing that then it might be possible to reserve some bag space. Ark asked Reid.

"Then can I briefly look at some things?"

"Look as much as you want. All of them are useable. If the deal is right then I'll trade."

Reid proudly pointed towards his items. But Ark was disappointed at the items. Unknown leather, chunks of meat, mushrooms and nuts.....they were ingredients that Ark left behind when crossing the wilderness. Some equipment items caught his eye, but they were made of cloth and the defense was low.

'Damn, you're like a cockroach carrying a pile of trash.'

Then Ark suddenly found strange items.

Hollow Steel Dentures (Magic)

Weapon type: Dentures

Durability: 13/50

Attack: 10~15

Weight: 30

User restrictions: Exclusively for vampire summons.

A hollow pair of dentures. These steel dentures were made to replace vampire fangs when the vampire became old and lost their teeth. Only a vampire can use it and it allows them to suck blood more easily. <Option: When Vampirism is used, the skill absorption rate +30%>

Shigashi's Leather Cloak

Armour type: Mantle

Durability: 13/50

Defense power: 10

Weight: 20

Use restriction: Available for all summons.

A leather cloak made from the leather of the Shigashi goat common in the Netherworld. The Shigashi is an animal known for living in harsh environments so its leather is high quality. Although the workmanship is rough, it is still useful in protecting the body.

The stats weren't that different from the japtem Ark found. In middle earth, he would receive approximately 1~2 gold for them. But the problem was the user restrictions attached to the item. There were items available for summons? He have never seen that kind of user restriction before.

"You mean that summons can wear this?"

"Summons? Ah, is that what middle earth calls our races? Huhuhu, were you surprised? The Galgin family knows everything. That's right, they were made for our species. Although it looks like this, it is a very valuable thing. Normal clothes won't be able to pass through when something is summoned to middle earth, but these are different. The materials were designed to cross over. Not a lot of species cross over to the other dimension from the Netherworld anymore. So they won't exchange anything for these items."

Reid grumbled.

'Netherworld? This is the Netherworld?'

There was a sudden flash in Ark's face. So far, Ark only knew that it was a different dimension. But this as the Netherworld? Wasn't the Netherworld where Dedric, Deimos and Radun lived?

'I see. That's why there was an Alamone in the ice caves. I should've noticed when talking to the Alamone.....'

Now Ark realized why he couldn't summon or recall his pets since getting here. Although he opened up a door to summon Dedric and Deimos using Spiritual

Power, this was the original world where they lived. It would be impossible to summon them. That's also why the penalty for dying wasn't forced recall but losing stats.

'Radun had been with me since it hatched so it is understandable, but why didn't Dedric and Deimos know where we were?'

"Eh? You don't understand. This is the first place we saw. But it's not where I live. In fact, there is a restriction to the distance we can move when Master summons us from the Netherworld and when we return."

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack.

Deimos nodded and agreed with Dedric's explanation. It was simple. In the Netherworld, his pets were limited to a particular area and couldn't leave it. In Dedric's case, he was limited to the vampire area. Because of that he never visited the outside world. As a skeleton, Deimos was restricted to a cemetery. But now they were wandering around the Netherworld.....because they were travelling with Ark, they were probably able to overcome the restrictions. It sounded complicated but it was actually pretty simple.

'Anyway my pets can use some of these items?'

Equipping items on his summons. He had never thought of it. Then wouldn't it be another way to make his pets grow?

"Will you sell it to me?"

"Well, I'd like to see your items. I said it a while ago, but I'll only trade if the items are worth it since it is difficult to find these items in other places. But I promise to trade if I see something worthy."

Ark quickly gathered the japtem in his bag and showed Reid. Reid looked around and identified a few items.

"This is good. The leather is high quality. I'll trade you Shigashi's Cloak for 100 of them. And it's not easy finding these bones and herbs. Okay, I'll give you the dentures for 50 of each."

Reid had pointed to the Mongoose leather and bones and the Seolmocho. He had gathered 1,000 of each item.

"I accept. Let's exchange."

Ark nodded and exchanged the items. Then he gave the steel dentures to Dedric and Shigashi's cloak to Deimos. Dedric wore the dentures and cheered.

"Oh, this is great? All of a sudden I feel like sucking blood!"

Clack clack clack! Clack clack clack clack!

Deimos also seemed satisfied with his cloak and started jumping. Ark also felt like skipping. He never imagined that he would be able to exchange japtem for items. If he managed to find more items in this dimension then Deimos' and Dedric's stats would go up tremendously.

'Okay, let's try to find my pets a full set of equipment before leaving here.'

"Well well, that was a good deal. Now what are you going to do?"

Reid asked after packing his bags with a satisfied face.

"Reid, you said that you've travelled all around the Netherworld? Have you ever heard of the name Magaro? He should look similar to me....."

Ark got to the point. Reid thought for a moment then shook his head and replied.

"Magaro.....I've never heard of that name. But I know people who look similar to you that live in a town."

"There are clans that look similar to me here?"

"Well, it's the Myutal race. Although originally they were quite ferocious, the Myutal that live here are relatively tame. Ah, that reminds me that, I know a very old man who lives in the mountains there. You might find out a lot of information if you go there. Just tell him that the peddler Reid sent you and you'll be welcomed."

"Where is the town?"

"If you travel for half a day then there will be a valley. The Myutal village is there. Anyway, I can't go to the village so we'll go our separate ways. I have business elsewhere."

Reid carried his backpack with a moan and began walking.

"Okay, the town is over there? Radun, transform!"

Ssak ssak ssak!

Radun's body turned large again and its legs appeared. Ark got on its back and began to run through the wilderness again. The different dimension.....no, the sky in the Netherworld spread out around him.

Act 6: Tragedy of the Three Pig Brothers

Pa pa pa pa! Pa pa pa pa!

A large lizard running through the wilderness caused a cloud of dust. It was Radunma carrying Ark. After separating from Reid, Ark traversed the wilderness without taking a break. While ignoring the background and the weather, he ended up running for 1 hour. Finally he found the valley that Reid mentioned. After going a little bit further in the valley, there was a small village.

"Is this a village in a different dimension?"

It was approximately 2~3 times the size of Lancel Village. However, the development appeared quite shabby as the buildings were falling down. The houses were covered with leather and looked like tents. When looked at closely, the tents looked like a refugee camp. Since there was no currency, it could be difficult to gain supplied through barter.

'I can get the necessary information from this village.'

"Radun, good work."

Ssak ssak ssak, ssak ssak ssak!

Radun became smaller and attached to his waist. When he walked up to the entrance, he saw the guards wearing leather clothes.

"Blue skin, blue skin. Hahaha, look at that."

Dedric saw the guard and burst out laughing. Just like Reid said, the Myutal was a race that looked similar to humans. But oddly, their skin colour was blue and the eyes were golden yellow. They looked like a smurf in one of those children's musicals and Ark felt like giggling as well. But since it was a species he was meeting for the first, he refrained from laughing and smirked instead. He had to refrain from dropping any intimacy or else he might not obtain any information.

"Dedric, shut up."

"But it's funny. Don't you think that they look funny?"

"Do you want to become like that?"

".....I'll shut up."

Dedric mimed zipping his mouth up.

"Excuse me."

The guards tensed up as they saw Ark approach.

"Who are you? I've never seen your face around here before."

"Yes, I've only just arrived from an incredibly distant place. After wandering the wilderness for so long, I was wondering if I could take a break here?"

"Hrmm, it doesn't seem that dangerous....."

"Of course, we're a little reluctant to let a stranger into town."

The guards looked Ark up and down and muttered. The atmosphere seemed a little bit unwelcome. When first arriving in a new village, the degree of intimacy depending on fame or alignment. But those numbers didn't apply in the Netherworld.

"Do you perhaps know Reid?"

"Reid? The peddler of the Galgin clan?"

"Yes, I came because of his recommendation. He said that the Myutal in this village were brave and tough, but they warmly welcomed visitors with softness and pride in their hospitality. Can't you spare such generosity for me who has travelled such a long distance?"

"Oh, Reid said that?"

Although Reid hadn't said that, the residents of the Netherworld were quite simple. The guards contemplated for a moment before nodding.

"Indeed, we won't turn away a weary traveller. Okay, you can enter the village. But you'll be kicked out if you cause any trouble."

"Thank you."

Ark smiled and entered the village. But he didn't hear the low voices of the guards speaking from behind him.

"He seemed to have travelled quite a difficult path."

"Exactly. But I didn't know about a tribe where the youths lacked colour."

The Myutal species was divided into a number of tribes. Because Ark looked similar to them, they determined that he was from another Myutal tribe. So they pitied him because he wasn't blue.....so the residents treated him like a handicapped person. But because of their pity, Ark was able to receive a lot of information from the residents.

There were many species who lived in the Netherworld. The Galgin who he met in the wilderness was one of them, and Dedric's clan of vampires and Deimos as a undead were also residents of the Netherworld. In other words, the difference between NPCs and monsters was unclear. An NPC might look like a monster, or a monster that attacked was instead a chaotic NPC.

'Then should I travel around this town with Deimos?'

Except for when there was a battle, Ark always carried around Deimos in his sword form. It was in order to lighten the burden on Radun. And he wanted to prevent the intimacy with the NPCs from being decreased. None of the NPCs would get a good impression of him if they saw a skeleton. In fact, he often had his intimacy decreased on middle earth if he travelled around with Deimos. On the other hand, Dedric was often useful for increasing intimacy. His character was bad, but he could transform into a cute little boy. So he was quite popular among adults and the elderly. But it didn't seem to be a problem when he looked around the village. He saw some monsters that he would instantly use Dark Blade on if he encountered them in the wilderness. Deimos was nothing compared to them.

However, the most common species among the NPCs was something resembling a human. The Myutal was a species that most resembled humans in the Netherworld. The Myutal were scattered all throughout the Netherworld. Most of them live in their tribes, but there were some Myutal that built a kingdom.

" I once met a traveller who talked about money. But they weren't very tolerable because they didn't like other species. Some tribes don't like the Myutal and are even hostile against us."

The shopkeeper near the village entrance said. The easiest way to get information was to find a store. Since travellers tended to visit the stores first, he could obtain a lot of rumours from there.

"I've listened well. Then can I see a few items?"

"Okay."

The shopkeeper nodded and pointed towards the shelves. It was a village with small development so he didn't expect much. It looked like commonplace japtem but Ark inspected them carefully. Although Reid had a lot of japtem, he had managed to find some items for his summons. Reid said that they weren't that common to find. But Ark was able to find a useable item.

Umma's Sap

Umma's Sap is obtained from an ancient plant.

Even though dozens of Umma trees were picked, it was only enough to fill one bottle. The high density nutrients dissolved inside has the effect of instantly restoring fatigue of the mind and body.

<+400 health instantly restored. But there is no effect when in an abnormal state such as poison or disease>

Nadingka's Fruit

The ancient plant Nadingka is notorious for its grabbing ability. If walking through a forest, you might find yourself yanked by the Nadingka's roots. However, the Nadingka will exert no harm. It will just touch the body of a passing traveller then go away.

<When used on an enemy, movement speed decreases by 50% for 1 minute>

Since the development was low, most of the items were consumption related. However, the effects of the plants were quite good for a primitive world. Umma's Sap recovered as much health as an intermediate recovery potion.

'This item could be sold in middle earth for money.'

But the quantity of the consumable items wasn't abundant. There was only 5 Umma's Sap and 50 Nadingka fruit. Ark exchanged it for some of the leather, bone and japtem he collected in the snowy mountains.

'Damn, there are too many overlapping items taking up bag space. I won't be able to barter recklessly.....I can't grasp whether it is expensive or cheap in terms of money.'

But if I've managed to obtain useful items that could be sold then I won't complain.....'

Ark finished in the shop and got to his main point.

"By the way, I heard that a wise old man lives in the vicinity of this village."

"Ah, you're talking about Beseutyu-nim."

"Can you tell me where he lives?"

"Just look for the biggest house. That is Beseutyu's house."

Ark left the store and walked on the main path looking for it. It was a small village so it wasn't difficult to find the house.

"Anyone here?"

Although he called from outside several times, nobody answered. Ark waited a while before sneaking a peek through the open door. When he entered, the wall was filled with full shelves. Bundles of crisp parchment was piled on the shelves like a mountain. They seemed to use bound parchment as a substitute for books in the Netherworld. Ark looked at the scrolls before going inside.

"Ah.....damn, unbelievable. What on earth happened? Why haven't they come back yet? Did something happen? I don't know what to do....."

In a corner, an old man pulled his hair and muttered.

"Excuse me."

"How am I supposed to do my work now? I really can't endure it."

"Uh.....I wanted to ask you something."

"Ah, I'm really anxious and concerned.....I don't want to go ask the stupid guards but I'm so worried.....if something happened then I won't be able to handle it."

"Excuse me."

Ark lightly tapped his shoulders, causing the old man to flinch and turn around. With a white beard and hair, the old man had an appearance like Papa Smurf's.

"Hah, what the? Who are you? Why did you just come into someone's house?"

"No one answered no matter how much I called from outside....."

"So you just came in without permission?"

"No, it's not....."

"What the hell? What do you want?"

The old man quickly asked without giving him any time to answer.

"I heard that Beseutyu-nim is the wisest person in this village."

"What the? God dammit, get out! I have no time for a chat!"

"It will only take a short time. Do you perhaps know someone called Magaro....."

"I said I don't want to hear it!"

Beseutyu wildly shouted and shook a cane at him. But the next moment, Beseutyu stopped and reached out for Ark's mantle. Then he asked Ark with surprised eyes.

"You, did you perhaps cross the East Moon?"

"Yes, that's right."

"So this is Galgashi's Fur?"

"That's right. This is Galgashi's Fur that I got from a mongoose."

Ark nodded and Beseutyu's face immediately changed. Beseutyu suddenly spoke in a very friendly voice.

"Ha, Galgashi is very notorious so you must be a great warrior to be able to take him down. Yes, a great warrior deserves kind treatment. Sit down here. But what were you here for? You were looking for a person?"

Did he have dementia? His demeanour changed in an instant.....elderly people didn't adapt that quickly. Anyway, he was lucky because the atmosphere seemed to be better. Ark nodded and asked.

"Yes, I'm looking for someone called Magaro. Have you heard of him?"

"Magaro.....did he also come over from middle earth like you?"

"You know where I came from?"

"I'm not an elderly person for no reason. I know much more than you do."

Beseutyu laughed and replied. As expected, the elderly really did know a lot.

"Yes, that's right. I came here to look for him."

"When did he cross over?"

"I've heard that it's been hundreds of years."

"Then I personally wouldn't have seen him. But there are ways to find out."

Beseutyu indicated the scrolls piled up.

"My family has recorded everything that's happened through the generations. That's right, those scrolls are records of the Netherworld's history. Isn't it great? If he ever passed through this area then records of him should be here. You might find the information that you want."

"Can you examine it for me?"

Ark asked in an urgent tone. Then he waited for Beseutyu's reply.

"Of course. If you accept my request."

"Yes? Request?"

A person he met for the first time was asking for a favour? Ark looked bewildered as Beseutyu sighed and said.

"Actually, I'm in a very big predicament at the moment."

".....Predicament?"

"You probably saw the existence of the dead when you came here."

"Yes, I've seen it a couple of times."

"Other people don't know this, but the dead play a very important role in the Netherworld. They're responsible for keeping the flow of power in the Netherworld balanced.....anyway, the deceased are an indispensable existence in this world. But recently, the deceased in this area have started disappearing."

Beseutyu said with a serious expression when scratching his beard.

"I told you before that I record everything that happens around here. In order to confirm if the rumours were true or not, I sent an assistant to Hagel Forest where the dead had been disappearing. But my grandson became curious and persistently followed. I agreed but....."

"He has not come back yet."

"That's right. He hasn't come back yet so clearly something happened. I was relieved because my assistant is very experience. Ah, Bona.....if something happened to Bona.....I'm so worried about my grandson to the point that I can't do any other work. But I can't go after them myself."

Beseutyu grabbed Ark's hands and begged.

"Now my request. Could you please find my grandson? If you've managed to defeat Galgashi then it shouldn't be that difficult. Yes? I'll do anything you want as long as you do this for me."

'A quest!'

Ark's eyes twinkled. The first quest received in the Netherworld. Who knows what kind of compensation it would give. And he could also find some clues related to Magaro's quest as a bonus. There was no reason to refuse.

"I understand."

He nodded and the quest information window appeared.

Beseutyu's Worries

You've received a request from an old man in a small village.

Beseutyu records the events that occur in the vicinity. Recently, he sent his assistant and his grandson to Hagel Forest to investigate an event. But some time has been and they haven't returned or contacted him. Find them in Hagel Forest and return them back safely.

<Difficulty level: C>

'It's been a long time since I've received a quest.'

Ark stared at the information window. He thought back to the siege, killing Alan and the Dark Brothers incident.....he really hadn't received any essential quests.

But the highlight of a game was its quests. A complicated quest could completely change the pace of a game.

“Then shall I leave?”

Ark left Beseutyu’s house and headed towards the entrance. But there was work to do first before leaving for Hagel Village. The quest had a C rank difficulty. When considering Ark’s level, the difficulty wasn’t that high. But he didn’t know the rules of this world. So he had to update the resurrection point in case he died.

‘My current resurrection point is the red wilderness on middle earth. Since the gate is closed, if I update the resurrection point to here then there is no way to return to middle earth.’

When he first arrived in the village, he hesitated at the idea. But since the beginning of Magaro’s quest was in the Netherworld, he couldn’t proceed with the quest in such a dangerous state. A totem made of bone and leather was placed at the village entrance. He had seen a similar totem in the jungle near Cairo. Although the resurrection point was at the Quartermaster’s in human villages, the totem build at the village entrance took the role of the Quartermaster’s instead. A message window appeared when he touched the totem.

-Would you like to register the ‘Valley Village’ in the Netherworld as your new base?

<Your previous base will be cancelled and it is possible to revive at the totem with a death penalty>

Ark finished the registration and unfolded his map. The red dot which Beseutyu indicated was blinking from a place not that far away. If he used Radun then he could get there in 10~20 minutes.

“Now shall I leave? Radun, transform.....eh?”

While Ark was ordering Radun to transform, he looked at the valley’s entrance in surprise. Three shadows emerged from where a sandstorm was raging.

“Wait.....those chubby figures are.....?”

“Huk huk huk, it’s a village!”

"Sob, I thought I would freeze and die."

"We also couldn't sleep properly after being chased by monsters....."

"I'm hungry Hyung-nim."

"Hang in there. We'll be able to rest once we enter the town."

The 3 merchants emerged from the sandstorm and approached the village. Yes, it was the Three Little Pigs who had chased after Ark and entered the Netherworld. They dived into the picture full of dreams. They had dreamed that they would find stacks of treasure piled up like a mountain.

"Huhuhu, now all the suffering is over. We'll wait for a chance to hit Ark in the back of the head and intercept the treasure!"

They hadn't chased after Ark with no plan. If the 3 of them tackled Ark then it wasn't possible for him to win. That's because they wandered the auction roo, for several days and got their hands on a bag of weapons and tricks. Very few people were aware of the fraudulent weapons so they were positive the weapons would hit Ark in his head.

"Now our suffering will end and we'll live happily!"

Puk puk puk!

The three pig brothers literally became buried in snow. After leaving the gate, they didn't find the treasure they expected. Everything was snow! Only the freezing cold greeted them. And they couldn't even see Ark who came before them. In fact, the dimensional door to the Netherworld in the cabin changed location every time someone entered it. In other words, the three brothers used the door after Ark and landed in a different location. Then their desperate struggle for survival began. They were merchants more used to handling money. However, they were dumped into the snowy mountains covered with snow and ice. Fortunately, they had prepared to chase after Ark and filled their bags with all sorts of travel related goods. They had thick coats and also bought enough food. And since they had the 'Camping' skill, there were in a relatively better position than Ark. But they were still merchants.

After coming down from the snowy mountains, the wilderness was too dangerous for them. No matter the distance, they would flee from monsters and after repeating this, they finally arrived at the village after running out of food. Meanwhile, Ark had rushed forward on Radun and arrived before them.

"Let's ask about Ark in this town."

"But he's already been here for more than a fortnight."

"He may have already grabbed the treasure and gone home."

Ulmeok cried out in a worried voice. In fact, that was what Buksil was most concerned about. If Ark already grabbed the treasure then all their suffering would be in vain. And after a fortnight had passed, there was no way of tracking Ark since his location was unknown.

"We can't just go back after we came here. We have to see it through to the end."

"Yes, but....."

So the Three Little Pig Brothers arrived at the village.

"It is good to meet you in a place like this."

Then they suddenly heard a familiar voice. Buksil lifted his head and barely swallowed his scream. Surprisingly, it was Ark looking at them with folded arms. Ulmeok swallowed his cry and said to his brothers in a desperate voice.

"Huk, A-Ark. Hyung-nim. It is Ark."

"I can see that. Damn. Although we were looking for him, to encounter him like this....."

"What do we do? Should we run away?"

Buksil muttered.

"No. This is fine. After all, it would be over if we couldn't find him. And it'll be useless if we run away after being caught. If he has doubts then it would be difficult to secretly follow him to the location. He'll have suspicions and it'll be impossible to hit him in the back of the head."

"But will he accept?"

"Huhuhu, I have an idea. He is simple. He believed us when we previously told him we were fans. He's definitely the weak type against those kind of things. If we keep on praising him then he'll be easy. Just watch me."

Then Buksil poked himself in the eye and turned around. His eyes became bloodshot and tears suddenly flowed from them. Buksil ran towards Ark in that state.

"Aigoo, Ark-nim! It's so good to see you!"

"Hrm.....what are you guys doing here?"

Ark squinted his eyes and stared at them. Buksil answered with a heavy sigh while tears dripped down his face.

"We've been looking for Ark-nim."

"Me?"

"Yes, actually. Isn't Ark-nim being supported by the fan club?"

"So what?"

"So what? Our fan club formed thanks to the excellent fighting scene Ark-nim showed. But our members have started declining because they haven't seen those scenes anymore."

"So? You want to stop the donations?"

"N-no! Absolutely not. Anyway, we respect Ark-nim so much that we went through a lot of suffering to meet you again. We were wondering if we could promote Ark-nim in order to get more members? So we came up with an idea. Wouldn't it be wonderful if we accompanied Ark-nim on an amazing adventure? If we show a video of the amazing adventure then our members will be impressed. And our donations will increase if the number of members increases."

Buksil clasped his hands together and entreated.

"How is it? Isn't it a great idea? After gathering the member's ideas, we began to search for Ark-nim. We looked up Ark-nim's achievements as a form of evidence. Then by chance.....it really was by chance.....we heard rumours that you went to the red wilderness and ended up following you here."

Buksil wiped the tears with his sleeves with a pitiful expression.

"Sob, you wouldn't know how much trouble we went through just to get here. But we endured thanks to our commitment to meeting Ark-nim. It is something I'm truly proud of."

"Hyung-nim!"

"Younger brothers!"

The three pig brothers embraced each other and cried.

‘How did these children shadow me?’

Ark stared at the three pig brothers playing around with a frown on his forehead. Ark couldn’t even laugh at the unbelievable excuse. He already knew that those guys were targeting Magaro’s legacy from a long time ago. Ark didn’t know how they followed him, but their ulterior motive was to hit him in the back.

‘I should just kill them.’

Although there were 3 of them, they were still merchants. But the problem was that if he killed them, he would obtain a chaotic alignment. But they wouldn’t go away even if he requested it.

‘How.....wait, aren’t these guys merchants? Then.....’

Ark suddenly came up with an idea of how to take advantage of the three pig brothers. After organizing it in his thoughts, Ark approached them.

“I’m really impressed.”

“Yes?”

“To think that my fans have such a high impression of me.....but granting your request is a burden for me. Frankly, this place is quite arduous by myself. I won’t be able to complete my task and protect you at the same time. In this situation, you might even die because of me.”

“You don’t have to worry about that.”

“Yes, we are not afraid of death.”

“We would be willing to die for Ark-nim.”

“We’ll do anything for you, even if it’s running errands!”

“You’ll do anything for me?”

A sinister smile then emerged on Ark’s face.

“Okay, then let me ask you something. Have you updated your resurrection place to here?”

“No. This is the first time here. We were just about to do it.”

“Don’t do it.”

“Huh?”

“In fact, I was just in a difficult situation. I’ve gathered a bunch of items in order to sell it and my bags are full. Unfortunately, I can’t sell it in this village so I have a surplus of items.”

“T-then?”

The three pig brothers suddenly felt anxious for some reason.

“It is simple. 1 of you should sell it instead.”

“You can’t sell the items here?”

“No, so one of you will have to return to middle earth and sell it there.”

“Eh? B-but we don’t know the way back.”

“Didn’t you say your resurrection place hasn’t updated yet?”

“.....!”

The three pig brothers now realised Ark’s intention and became terrified. Yes, if they didn’t update the resurrection point in this world then wouldn’t they revive in middle earth if they died? In other words, Ark was saying to die while holding his items. In fact, this method was often used in online games. It might take some time to get back to the village, so people just died. But it was more used in other games. Most users wouldn’t use such a method in New World since they would lose experience and stats if they died.

“You said you were my fans? Wouldn’t fans who came all the way here do such a simple favour for me?”

“B-but.....”

“Don’t you want to take a video of my adventures? In this situation, I would have to return to middle earth to sell my things. If I have to go back then wouldn’t that be a boring video? Anyway, you don’t need 3 people to shoot a video.”

The three pig brothers had nothing to retort.

“We need to talk about it for a little bit.”

Finally, Buksil took his brothers and withdrew to talk about it. Ulmeok let out a frightened cry.

"H-hyung-nim. What do we do?"

"Um.....He is an evil guy. He obviously considers our lives worthless. But it's not necessarily a bad thing. Anyway, that guy has extraordinary senses so he might become aware of our goal before we reach the destination. We'll have no chance if that happens."

"Then.....?"

"Ulmeok, you might have to go through a little bit of trouble this time."

Buksil said as he placed his hands on Ulmeok's shoulders.

"You mean I'll be the one killed?"

"We have no choice. If we don't give into his demands then he'll leave. And we can't secretly follow him because he's seen us. We have no choice but to accept the requirements if we want to go with him."

"Sob.....it is terrible."

Tears dripped from Ulmeok's eyes.

"I'm sorry. But Hyung won't let your sacrifice be in vain. I'll do whatever it takes to steal the treasure. When that happens, you'll be laughing as you talk about what occurred today."

"Sob, I understand."

"I'm sorry. Don't cry!"

The three pig brothers burst out crying as they embraced each other.

"Okay. Because we respect Ark-nim. We'll accept your request."

After a while, the three pig brothers returned with swollen eyes.

"Ah, I can live now. Thank you. I won't forget it. So let's sign the contract."

Merchant's agreement.

<Contractor: Ulmeok=Ark>

Ulmeok will sell the items given by Ark and then send the money to Ark's registered mailbox at the Magic Institute. There will be no sales charge and everything will be

handled for free.

Ark handed over his japtem after receiving the contract.

“Then.....I’ll be going.”

Ulmeok looked at his brothers as he spoke tearfully but turning around and went off to die.

“Sob.....Ulmeok, your sacrifice will not be in vain.....”

Buksil and Sapjil teared up as they watched their brother get further away. However, there was a wicked smile on Ark’s face.

‘Heh, they dared to attempt cheap tricks in front of me?’

Ark had no intention of finishing it like this. A lot of monsters in the Netherworld dropped japtem. In other words, once he’s filled his bag then the situation would be repeated again. Buksil and Sapjil will be his emergency bags for the moment. Every time he filled up his bag then there would be an excuse to send them away. No, he didn’t have to give a serious reason. As long as he received the contract then he might even just let them die during a fight.

‘With two guys, I can use it twice in the future!’

Now he didn’t have to worry about bag space for a while.

‘I’ll get rid of them before I search for Magaro’s laboratory.’

It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that he was truly wicked. Ark was ruthless once he’s sunk his claws into an opponent. But there was one problem. He didn’t know whether they were serious or not, but Buksil was really recording while he accompanied Ark. If he posted on the public bulletin board then he would reveal Ark’s whereabouts. It could become quite a problem for Ark who didn’t want to catch people’s attention. But if he refused then there was no reason to take them along with him. However after thinking about it, there was no reason to worry for the moment.

“But how are you going to record me?”

“Yes? Well, I’m using an item for video capture.....”

Buksil brought out an item similar to a telescope. In New World it was possible to purchase an item to record videos.

Reggie's Magic Projector

A luxurious magic projector launched by the Magic Institute.

Using the information from the ancient memory crystals, this magic projector has to technology to record things. However, the memory only lasts for 1 hour and it is sold separately from the projector.

It was a relatively expensive item for a hobby but it was quite popular among the dating couples in New World.

"Really? Then I have to transform myself. Because my fans know me as Dark Wolf."

Yes, if he turned into Dark Wolf then he would become a different person from Ark. Then there would be no problem if the video became public!

"Now, let's go?"

Ark transformed into Dark Wolf and smiled, revealing his fangs. The wolf and the pigs.....their relationship was fated.

Act 7: Hunting the Dead

"Hrmm.....this is also useable."

Darkness began to spread in the forest. One wolf was shaking his tail and collecting fruits. A wolf with flowing black fur, it was Ark who had transformed into a wolf. Ark had arrived at Hagel Forest 1 hour after he left the village. The distance would only take Radun 20 minutes, but Ark walked there. That was because Radun wouldn't be able to carry Buksil and Sapjil as well.

"Huhuhu, I can now relax and scrape as much items as I want."

For more than a fortnight, he had been worried about bag space and hadn't been able to pick up everything. Because of that, his stress had piled up. But now he didn't have to worry about his bag thanks to the pigs. No, he had to collect as much items as possible and kill them before finding Magaro's laboratory. So Ark kept on singing as he scraped up items. He found various magic ingredients using 'Magic Detection' in the forest and he couldn't just give it up.

Grrrrrrr.....!

Monsters also appeared in the dark forest. However, Ark would just neatly slice it up before piling the items in his bag. After passing through the ice caves and the wilderness, Ark had raised his stats and there was also the dark attribute bonus.....the monsters in the vicinity weren't capable of threatening Ark. Regardless of the level, but there weren't a lot of people with Ark's stats. Therefore he had an edge while hunting. Every time Ark's bag became heavier, Buksil's and Sapjil's face became increasingly gloomy. Once Ark's bags became full then they knew one of them would have to go and die. The two pigs trembled at the idea of becoming the wolf's lunch.

"Now I've collected most of the ingredients here so shall I earnestly begin the quest?"

Ark cracked his furry hands and began to explore. But the forest was huge and it wasn't easy to find a clue. Then Radun who had been snooping around licked its tongue and pointed in one direction. At the same time, a message window appeared in front of Ark.

-Radun has used 'Stalking.' Radun has found suspicious footprints leading into the forest.

When Radun used Stalking, the outline immediately became clear.

'Footprints? Beseutyu only sent his grandson and assistant. Yet these footprints indicate at least 20 people. Did I find something unrelated to my quest? No, you never know so I should check it out anyway.'

Ssak ssak ssak ssak!

Radun nodded proudly and indicated the front. The footprint tracks were headed in that direction. Ark followed Radun and tracked the prints deeper into the forest. How far did he go? He was walking along a wide road when he suddenly heard a feeble groan from ahead of him. When he approached, he saw that someone injured was leaning against a tree trunk.

'Blue skin.....a Myutal. Perhaps.....?'

Ark came closer and shook his shoulders.

"Are you okay?"

"Ugh.....w-who are you?"

"I'm here at the request of Beseutyu who lives in the Valley Village."

"B-Beseutyu.....teacher sent you?"

The person raised his head in pain and looked at Ark.

"What on earth happened? Where is Beseutyu's grandson?"

'Dammit.....'

Ark knew what he needed to do in this situation. Usually when he met injured NPCs during a quest, the NPC's health would not automatically recover. He had to use recovery potions or magic to heal them. The NPC might be holding a clue for the quest so he couldn't let him die. Ark felt like crying and handed him one of his Umma's Sap. After the person recovered their energy, he began to explain the whole story.

"Thank you. I'm called Guran and I work as an assistant for Beseutyu Teacher. I recently received Teacher's request to investigate this forest. But suddenly I met the Nakujuk clan....."

"Nakujuk?"

"They're the Myutal that dominates the Northern region. Unlike us, they're aggressive Myutal and won't hesitate to kill people. I don't understand why, but they have something to do with the disappearance of the dead that Teacher was investigating. I witnessed them putting the deceased onto a wagon with an iron window and leaving. Then.....while I was looking for a way to inform Teacher, I ended up being attacked."

"So what about Bona?"

"I don't know. After they hit me and I collapsed, they seemed to have dragged him somewhere. Ugh, I don't know what those guys are doing with Bona....."

"I have to hurry. Please guide me."

Guran became surprised at Ark's words.

"You're going to help?"

"Why would I come here if I wasn't thinking of helping?"

"B-but those guys are the Nakujuk. There are also 20 of them. Even though I've experienced all sorts of hardships, I was easily defeated by them. You don't know me yet you're still offering to help?"

“How can I let them go when they are capturing innocent people?”

Guran looked at Ark with foolish eyes. He seemed quite impressed. Indeed, it was natural to be impressed with someone who suddenly appeared and offered to risk their life to help him. But Ark had no interest in Bona's life. He was willing to risk his life because of the quest. And the reason for the hurry in his voice.....

“Okay, the appearance of the hero who can't tolerate injustice. Ah, good. Now moving on to the next scene.”

Buksil was standing behind the magic projector and gave a thumbs up. It was the excuse he used to follow Ark, but Buksil was actually filming. When Ark killed the monster, Buksil filmed it on the projector. Unlike a professional who needed to cut and edit, all he needed to do to film a dramatic scene was turn the projector on and off.

At first, Buksil was quite annoying. However, Ark came up with an idea after watching the recordings. It was the first time Ark had seen a scene of his gameplay. But the scene of a black wolf swinging his sword against a giant monster surrounded by trees looked quite cool.

‘Wouldn't it be the same with other people watching this scene?’

Once he got the idea, Ark started to become greedy. Since he was transformed into Dark Wolf, his identity didn't matter. So he started putting on an act. Guran looked at Buksil and asked with a perplexed face.

“What's that?”

“It's nothing.”

Ark smiled and shook his head.

“Over there.”

Guran hid in the bushes and pointed in front of him. After accompanying him for a few minutes, Ark was able to find the Nakujuk clan. Located inside the forest, a group of approximately 20 Nakujuk were gathered around a campfire.

‘They’re not blue?’

The Myutal had different skin colours according to their tribes, with the Nakujuk being red. And next to the carriage Guran mentioned was a cage. It was dark but he could clearly see the deceased souls that were trapped. Of course, he had no interest in the dead. He was there to rescue Beseutyu’s grandson, Bona. Guran looked at Ark with a worried expression.

“It is impossible by yourself. I’ll help as well.”

“No, aren’t you still recovering? Please leave it to me.”

Ark shook his head with a confident expression. The level of the Nakujuk clan was between 290~300. Meanwhile, Ark had reached level 238 in the wilderness. With that dark attribute bonus, that was level 333. Now it was time for Ark to judge his combat power. Since he got quite a lot of stat bonuses, his abilities were higher compared to his level. And the darkness attribute bonus didn’t simply raise his level. It also increased all his stats by 40%. That meant that the stat bonuses he received were also similarly applied. When considering users with 30~40 levels more than him, it wasn’t an exaggeration to say that his combat power was a lot higher.

‘But I can’t just blindly rush in.’

“Dedric, go lure five or six guys.”

“Understood, Master.”

Dedric flew towards the Nakujuk’s campsite. Usually it wasn’t easy for a monster to approach campsites. However, Dedric specialized in these sorts of things. And since he was always luring enemies during battle, he developed new professional skills.

-Your pet Dedric has learned a new skill. Taunt (Beginner, active): Rile up your opponents and induce a strong hostility in them towards you. The angrier you make your opponent, the longer the duration will last and there will be a wider range of effects.

<Range of 10 metres. Mana consumption: 30>

It was a perfect skill for Dedric. Dedric waited patiently for some of the enemies to patrol the perimeter. And after 7 people left the camp, he immediately threw a small stone.

“What the?”

The Nakujuk members turned around and saw Dedric taunting them. They started to feel dirty as soon as they saw him! The Nakujuk warriors pulled out their weapons and rushed towards him. Dedric flew through the branches and lured them into the forest while Ark followed. While the others were paying attention to the noisy fight, they didn’t notice Ark at all who had hid himself with ‘Stealth.’ He aimed for a backstab with the first blow!

“Ugh, what the?”

One of the Nakujuk collapsed and the battle began.

“7 people. It is a little tight but I can handle it!”

Ark swung Gwisal’s sword and plunged among the Nakujuk. The Nakujuk were certainly stronger than normal monsters. Their strength and stamina weren’t that high, and their defense was low since they wore leather clothes. However, their agility and attack speed was beyond imagination. They all used a thin rapier and the speed at which they wielded it was dazzling. Three or four attacks would instantly hit if he looked away even for a moment. But a relaxed smile spread on Ark’s face and he just laughed.

“Shall I test this out? Good, take this, Flash!”

At that moment, Ark shot out a stream of light. Then he moved in a zigzag pattern like lightning in a dark sky and stepped among the Nakujuk.

Susasasasak, Puaaak!

There was a ringing sound, and at the same time a terrifying fountain of blood rose in the air. The 7 of them had been struck at the same time and their health steadily decreased. That was the power of the new skill set Ark learnt, ‘Flash.’ Learning as much skills as possible was good. He never knew what combination of skills would create a new skill set. And Ark agreed with this idea. The effect appeared when he raised ‘Sprint’ and ‘Dark Dance.’

The rating of ‘Sprint’ has been raised after a lot of experience. There is a limit to increasing the chances of survival with a strong weapon or sturdy armour. Escaping is not a shameful behaviour. Indeed, it is foolhardy to continue to face the enemy

because of being ashamed by running away. Sometimes having quick legs is more useful than a sword or armour. Since Sprint has reached intermediate, you can consume more mana for a more explosive dash.

<For 5 seconds, speed +75%, Mana consumption: 30>

*Thanks to the combination of 'Sword Hand Combat', 'Dark Dance' and 'Sprint', you have learnt the set skill 'Flash.' (Pre-requisites: skills in the sword (Sword-Hand Combat) series, footwork (Dark Dance) and dash (Sprint) series) Once all the skills in the set reaches intermediate rank, you can learn a new skill (The type and effects of the skill depends on the profession)>

Flash: A mana explosion will raise your attack speed and movement speed to the limit. Your blade can attack any enemy in the battlefield in a flash. However, the technique's focus is on speed so the attack will fall. Thanks to your reaction rate and reflexes increasing, your evasion and critical hit will rise dramatically.

<During the flash movement, you will deal 70% of your attack power to all enemies within a 20 metre radius, and your evasion and critical hit probability will increase by 30%. Mana consumption: 500>

'Dark Dance' and 'Sprint' had a large growth rate after he registered them as major skills. When he swung the sword, he could deal damage to all enemies within a 20 metre radius. It was a wide area skill using a sword. Although it only did 70% damage, it didn't matter when he used 'Blade Maintenance' and 'Elemental Sword.' In the wilderness, monsters only appeared by themselves. So he never had the chance to use Flash and relied on Dark Blade for damage. But if he was dealing with multiple enemies then it was a 180 degree change.

"Flash, Flash!"

When Ark continuously used Flash, the 7 people had their health decreased to 40%. It was to the extent that it was raining blood!

"Uhh, m-monster!"

The Nakujuk's morale immediately shot down to the bottom.

"Now they're ripe for the picking. Dedric, Deimos, crush them!"

"Bring it on, these red skinned bastards!"

Clack clack clack clack!

Since the start of the battle, they've lost half their health. Under the wave of attacks by Ark and his summons, the Nakujuk warriors collapsed in vain. When 4 people died, the rest became frightened and ran away.

"It's impossible with our skills. Call for help!"

"Not a chance."

Ark took out the Nadingka's fruit and threw it. When the fruit hit them, vines starting wrapping around their limbs. Thanks to that, their movements slowed down until it seemed like they were in a slow motion video. In a blink of an eye, Gwisal's sword cut into them and they collapsed.

"This is unbelievable!"

Guran burst out when he saw Ark handle Nakujuk in an instant. Buksil who was holding the magic projector was speechless and just stared with his mouth open. But in fact, the most surprised person was Ark. His landslide victory against the Nakujuk was completely unexpected. Since he had an easy time fighting the monsters in the wilderness, he hadn't realised how strong he was now. No, this was much stronger. Even though the 7 Nakujuk was level 290, he only had his health decreased by 40%. In addition, Dedric and Deimos had almost none of their health decreased. It meant there was no burden.

'Perhaps the Nakujuk are incredibly weak?'

He contemplated the thought.

'If it's to this extent, dealing with 10 people.....no, the remaining 15 people will be enough. But will it be boring repeating the same battle? I have to finish it perfectly. What should I try out this time?'

Ark spoke towards the magic projector like he was in a play.

"Well, those guys are too weak. Although I'm certain I can win, a warrior should always be prepared for every situation."

Ark immediately took out his pot and cooked a dish. He mixed the Icecap's Decisions from the snowy mountains with some ingredients and created a survival cooking dish.

-Snowy Ice WaterThe coolness of the icecap has dissolved into the water. It is

possible to change the properties when mixed with food. However, if you eat it carelessly then the temperature of your stomach will decrease.

<Additional effects when mixed with food: For 10 minutes, Cold resistance -50%, Fire resistance +50%>

Ark used 'Stealth' to hide close to the campsite holding the ice water. Then he waited until the Nakujuk finished preparing dinner. Ark crept closer and poured the ice water into the pot. Then he withdrew and watched the situation.

"Mmmm, what a delicious smell. Let's eat."

"Hey, it is time for dinner everybody!"

"The guys patrolling still haven't come?"

"Let's just leave some aside for them."

"Eh? Somehow the soup tastes better today."

The Nakujuk warriors started to ravenously eat the soup. Then a little bit of time passed.

"Eh? I'm eating soup but why do I feel more cold?"

"Ohhh, it's not a joke. Why is it so cold?"

'Now!'

Ark who had been watching suddenly bolted forward. Buksil hurriedly turned on the magic projector.

"Ark-nim, we'll cheer you on! I'd like a nice scene!"

Ark didn't forget to laugh a little bit, revealing some of his fangs.

"Radun, transform! Let's go Dedric, Deimos!"

Ssak ssak ssak!

Ark assaulted the camp while riding Radunma.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Radunma rushed into the camp and it instantly became a mess. Burning firewood went flying everywhere as the pot overturned.

“What, what the? A black wolf and a lizard?”

“It’s an attack!”

“That’s it! Radun, come back!”

Ark quickly jumped off Radunma who transformed back. In fact, he had rushed forward riding Radunma for the sake of the scene. Of course, Radunma could be used for combat. When fighting on Radunma, he got a 10% increase in attack and defense. But at the same time, there was a fatal disadvantage. His forward thrust was 500% faster, but stepping backwards or changing directions was quite slow. While his ‘Riding’ skill was slowly rising, it was still at a beginner level. Therefore, it was quite a disadvantage in a battle like this. In a large scale battle, only a knight wearing heavy armour would have an advantage fighting on a horse.

‘Anyway, I wonder if that scene looked good?’

Ark pulled out his sword with a grin.

“Elemental sword, Ice attribute!”

After he used the skill, Gwisal’s sword was wrapped in a white frost. With the Nakujuk in an abnormal state, their movements obviously slowed down.

‘Okay, as expected the effects are showing!’

“Flash!”

Ark moved between the Nakujuk clan like a flash of lightning. He instantly struck 16 of them with his sword and they turned a pale blue. Ark had been aiming for this. Since they already drank the ice water, their cold resistance went down by 50%. When struck with his frost sword, they received further damage and obtained the ‘Frozen’ state.

‘A devastating effect!’

The great thing was that the ‘Frozen’ state overlapped. Every time they obtained ‘Frozen,’ their movement speed decreased by 15%. If three or four of them stacked up then movement speed would decrease by 50%. In addition, once the ‘Frozen’ state stacked up 100% then it was impossible for them to move anymore. That was the main reason a weapon with the ice attribute was incredibly expensive. However,

Ark could use his skill to freely add an ice attribute to his sword whenever he wanted. In addition, the use of 'Flash' meant that all enemies received the ice damage at the same time. Of course, the chances of a critical hit also increased in this state. Ark was originally a user who relied on his tremendous agility and critical hits. In addition, Flash increased the chances of a critical hit so when he struck 16 enemies, at least 5 of them would receive a critical hit. It was a combination of Survival Cooking, Elemental Sword and Flash! Ark swung his sword five times in a row using Flash.

"Keuak!"

"Ooooh, c-cold....."

"I can't move my body!"

The Nakujuk's health quickly fell to 50% and they all had the 'frozen' state. He had completely sealed the Nakujuk's amazing speed. The only one who could move at his original speed was Ark.

"Let's do this before the frozen state wears off. Demonic Opening!"

Kyaaaaak!

Once the seal was lifted, the ghosts jumped out wildly. Although Elemental Sword, the use of Demonic Opening made Gwisal's damage transcend imagination. The Nakujuk were frozen and smashed to pieces when attacked. Once in a critical condition, the Nakujuk were split open using Drastic Measures like a frozen mackerel. Meanwhile, some of the Nakujuk unfroze and rushed towards Ark but it was already too late. Gwisal's sword flashed three or four times and they eventually collapsed to the ground.

"Sheesh, didn't you do too much? We didn't get a chance to do anything."

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack clack.

Dedric and Deimos started complaining.

"Heh, I poured cold water on your fighting spirit. Sorry. But you'll get another chance to fight."

Ark started saying a monologue while putting his sword away. He was still paying attention to the filming of the movie. While his heart was excited, he deliberately put on a casual expression. 1 against 16. Until recently, it was something he never

would've dared try. He only had his health decreased by 60%. So it wasn't an exaggeration to say that it was a landslide victory.

"Indeed Ark-nim. You really are awesome!"

"He handled those many warriors alone.....it is the romance of a true warrior!"

Buksil and Sapjil clamoured together. Indeed, when would a merchant get to see such an incredible sight?

"This is not the time. Please hurry! I have to rescue the innocent people!"

Ark quickly searched the bodies of the Nakujuk warriors. As a humanoid enemy, they had dropped some equipment items.

Myutal's Rapier(Magic)Weapon type: One-handed Rapier

Attack: 20~25

Durability: 23/25

Weight: 20

User restriction: Level 120, Agility more than 200

The sharp rapier used by the Nakujuk clan of the Myutal species in the Netherworld. As a lightweight weapon, it is very easy to use. When equipped with this and the Nakujuk's agility, no enemy's defense can hold out.

<Option: Attack Speed +20%>

Dirty KeyA public key that can open the Nakujuk's iron carriage.

'Myutal's Rapier? Although the attack is bad for its level, the option of addition attack speed it quite good.'

The reason for the Nakujuk clan's incredible attack speed was influenced by the rapier. When equipped with two weapons with +20% attack speed, it would increase to 40%. With that incredible speed, Ark wouldn't have been able to hold out against a barrage of attacks. It was an excellent choice to use the ice sword.

"Bona-nim, Bona-nim. Are you okay?"

At that time, Guran ran out of the forest towards the carriage. Then a boy who was sitting calmly in the carriage lifted his head.

“Guran, you’re alive!”

“Yes, the warrior Teacher sent helped defeat the Nakujuk clan.”

“Grandfather!”

Bona grabbed the iron window and stared at Ark with eyes filled with respect. Ark smiled and walked towards the carriage. He was looking for the lock when a sudden movement made he flinch. Inside the carriage was a woman wearing a white robe. She was not a Myutal. It was a user like Ark, and a woman that Ark was familiar with.

“La-Lariette-nim?”

Ark stuttered as he looked at her with a stupid expression. Lariette.....the Lariette that he had last seen in Silvana was in the iron carriage. Lariette jumped and looked at Ark.

“Uh, how do you know my name?”

“Huh? What is that?”

Ark was puzzled until he belatedly realized that he had transformed into Dark Wolf.

“Ah, it’s me. I’m Ark.”

“A, Ark-nim?”

“Yes, thanks to several circumstances I’ve transformed myself into a wolf.”

“How did Ark-nim get here?”

“That’s what I want to ask you.”

Ark and Lariette looked at each other with bemused eyes. They never expected this chance encounter to occur. But wasn’t it more intense because it was unexpected? So far, 8 people have entered the Netherworld. No, it was 11 people if he included the pig brothers. 11 people out of millions of users. Who knew that they would meet each other in such a place? It was indeed a twist of fate.

“I’m here because of a quest.....chasing after the dead.....”

"Oh, wait a minute. I'll open the carriage first."

"Huk, w-what the hell? Ark-nim! Above! Look above!"

Ark had been taking out the key to open the carriage. Then Buksil suddenly shot out of the forest screaming. Ark reflexively raised his head. A dark shadow came shooting down out of the night sky. The huge monster roared and blocked Ark's way.

"What, what the?"

"D-Draken!"

Guran yelled after he lifted his head. The Duerakan was a wyvern like monster. However, it was several time bigger and looked more ferocious than a wyvern. The Draken looked around before opening its mouth and shrieking.

Kurwarwarwarwa-!

Buksil and Sapjil screamed and flopped down onto the ground. Guran also became stiff. This was due to the immense pressure Draken used. However, one of the characteristics of Ark's profession was a 50% resistance against Fear. With his passive skill 'Courage,' his immunity increased to 60%. Ark didn't shrink away from the shriek at all.

"This bastard.....Dark blade!"

Ark jumped and swung Gwisal's sword. The Draken grabbed the carriage and flapped its huge wings. Then the whole carriage was lifted. All Lariette could do was cling to the bars.

"Ah, Ark-nim!"

"Lariette-nim! Sprint!"

Ark tried his hardest to catch up but the Draken disappeared into the darkness. It all happened in an instant. Ark looked at the dark sky blankly. Then Buksil walked over and muttered.

"Yah, this time the scene is good. A fateful encounter and a kidnapping, how exciting!"

Ark's lips crept up and then a cry echoed through the darkness.

"Do you want to go to hell?"

"Ready. Summon the slime!"

JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members took their positions. Then Jjak-tung tore the scroll.

-Slime's Time NO.2 scroll has been used.<All slimes within a 500 metre radius will be called. The called slime will help any allies attack enemies for 10 minutes. However, this will be deactivated with the first strike.>

A huge slime appeared after they used the scroll.

"Here's one. Let's deal with it before another one comes!"

Owaaaaah!

The rehabilitation members flocked around it carrying weapons. After leaving Ark at Salrin's Towers, JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members proceeded with the plan of mass producing Slime's Immortality Pill. The Meow and thieves had already started gathering the 'Fangs of a Hook Bat' while the raccoons were gathering the 'Roots of a Mandragora that has received moonlight.' Thanks to that, Lancel Village had already gathered a considerable amount of ingredients. The remaining ingredients was the 'Unicorn Horn' and the 'Corrupted Fairy Wings.'

But Ark was procuring those ingredients, so JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members started hunting for the Slime's Essence in Cairo's underground labyrinth. In fact, 'Slime's essence was the most important ingredient that they couldn't obtain using money. So Ark made copied of the skill onto scrolls and the rehabilitation group went hunting slimes. However, the pollution slime had a property that allowed them to evade most physical attacks. Since the rehabilitation members didn't have a magician, it was a difficult opponent for them. So they came up with this method.

"Now, start. Everybody ready! Haaayaahh!"

JusticeMan grabbed the slime with both hands and ripped it apart. Then something fell out of the slime onto the ground. The form of the slime was similar to a water

balloon. Once it broke apart for a little bit, the viscous liquid fell to the ground along with the nucleus.

“Now, all together!”

The rehabilitation members stampeded towards the nucleus. Once it was destroyed, the slime exploded everywhere.

.....It was definitely a crude way of hunting!

Anyway, JusticeMan and the rehabilitation members manages to defeat the slime using this method. The great thing about Slime's Time was that the slimes were friendly unless they were attacked. Therefore they could leisurely handle one slime at a time. In addition, sometimes the slime would handle the polluted skeletons that appeared.

“Wah, here's another one!”

Roco was gathering the japtem and lifted up a Slime's Essence.

“Hehehe, then that is the 5th one?”

“Once the rest of the ingredients are gathered then we can create 5?”

“Besides, the slimes give quite a lot of experience.”

One rehabilitation member yelled.

“Yesterday I've dropped by Lancel Village and they've gathered the rest of the ingredients. All that's left is the Unicorn Horn and the Corrupted Fairy Wings.....”

At the moment, Roco suddenly felt a chill as she trembled.

“Roco, what's wrong?”

“I don't know. I just suddenly felt a chill.”

“Are you getting a cold? The weather these days is quite chilly.”

JusticeMan said with a concerned voice. Roco muttered in confusion.

“Really? Somehow I don't think so.....”

“But what if it is a cold? Today you should exit early and take a rest.”

“Hrmm.....”

Roco scratched her head and looked uncomfortable.

‘That’s weird. Why do I feel so anxious? Somehow I feel like something very unpleasant happened.....perhaps something happened to Ark oppa? Don’t tell me he attracted another shrew fox? It can’t be.....ah, I can’t leave Oppa alone. The world is filled with too many foxes.’

A woman’s intuition truly was scary. It was particularly fearful when it came to another woman.

‘I have to stop it. This weekend I’ll drag him out on a date no matter what.’

The girl vowed to do so.

Act 8: Stabbing Ark to Death

Rain poured from the dark skies. With an abrupt roaring, thunder and lightning flashed among the dark clouds. While following a shadow, lightning ripped through the darkness. Black and white shadows were seen flying through the sky.

Kaaaaaaa-!

Four stingrays were flying through the heavy rain.

“Sheesh, this weather is insane. Guran!”

Ark shouted as he clenched the stingray’s reins tightly.

“It the thunder hits then a serious incident will occur. Let’s fly lower between the valley.”

“I understand. Hiyah!”

Guran twisted the reins forcefully and the stingray folded its wings and shot downwards. The rest of the stingrays followed closely through the valley. Ark could hear Buksil and Sapjil screaming from behind him.

“Hieeee, we’re falling!”

“Hold on tight! I-I-I-If they miss then it’s the end!”

"Kikikiki, look at those faces crumple. It's just like looking at a balloon deflating."

Dedric cackled and laughed. Yes, Ark and his companions were flying through the air on stingrays.....let's try to explain how this happened. If we revert to the moment Draken stole the carriage away, Ark sent Dedric chasing after it. But after a while, Dedric returned with a tired face.

"I made a mistake, Master. It is impossible to catch up with it."

"This good for nothing fellow!"

While Ark was berating Dedric, Guran interrupted him.

"I know where the Draken is going."

"You do?"

"Yes, the crest of the Nakujuk clan was stamped on the Draken's neck. Obviously the Nakujuk had been breeding the Draken. Then he must be going to the Hill of Despair. The Nakujuk have a base there."

"Do you know the location of that place?"

"Of course."

Guran nodded and added.

"But no matter how fast you are, it'll take two full days on horseback to reach the Hill of Despair. Furthermore, there is a steep mountain that blocks the path and it is too dangerous to cross it. The Nakujuk clan aren't afraid of threats because of that mountain."

'Damn.....'

"I have a way. But I have to return to the village in the valley."

So Ark returned to the valley with Guran. Beseutyu also heard that his grandson Bona had been captured by the Nakujuk.

"Aaaaah, I knew it! I knew it would be like this! I shouldn't have let him go.....now it's all over. Ah, Bona!"

Beseutyu was plucking his hair and crying when Guran said.

"Please relax Teacher. It's not the time for this."

"How can I calm down now? Huh? This is all because of you. You couldn't defend Bona....."

"I'll receive any punishment you want. But before that, don't I need to rescue Bona-nim?"

"You idiot! You think you can rescue Bona from the clutches of the Nakujuk?"

"It is possible with that person."

Guran looked at Ark with eyes overflowing in trust.

"I saw his skills with my own eyes. A normal Myutal can't compare to that person's unusual martial arts ability. He'll definitely be able to rescue Bona-nim from the Hill of Despair."

After Guran's description, Beseutyu wept and grabbed Ark's hands.

"Oh, yes. I can only believe in you now. Please rescue my grandson."

"Don't panic. I'll bring him back no matter what."

Ark nodded and the quest information window updated.

Quest has been updated.

Beseutyu's Worries= Rescue Bona!

Although you have found Bona in Hagel Forest, he has been kidnapped by the Draken of the Nakujuk clan. Beseutyu is on the verge of insanity worrying about his grandson Bona. He might really go crazy. If you want to obtain information from him, you should chase after Draken and rescue Bona. But this mission won't be easy. Since the Hill of Despair is the base of the Nakujuk clan, there is no guarantee that you or your colleagues will live.

<Difficulty level: B>

It connected to a B ranked difficulty quest. It was the first time he saw a B ranked quest. But Ark had no choice. He had to complete it if he wanted to receive the desired reward from Beseutyu.

'I can't believe I met Lariette-nim here.'

His mind was very confused. She was a special existence for Ark.

Love at first sight.....the expression was a little bit exaggerated, but from the first moment he felt something strange that was difficult to put into words. In that situation, the simple hand that she stretched out meant a lot more to him. But his feelings was closer to admiration or idolizing than love. But he had given up when he saw her with Alan. However fate was truly weird. After all that had happened, to meet in a place like this.....

‘Anyway, I can’t just pretend I didn’t see her.’

He had to complete the quest and rescue Lariette.

‘Since it requires the same actions, I don’t have to choose between the two goals.’

“Now you have to hurry. Come over here.”

Beseutyu lead them outside the village to a place close by in the valley. He belatedly realised that there were a lot of Myutal trainers. Their job was to capture wild animals and tame them. That was the reason why there were many monster NPCs in the Valley Village. It was in order to use the tamed skyrays flying through the sky. Ark had often witnessed skyrays flying above him in the wilderness.

“I’ll guide you until the Hill of Despair.”

Guran said as the skyray rose towards the sky. So the desperate Ark and his party rode the skyrays towards the hills. They quickly passed through the wilderness, the stone forest and the river of light. After 1 hour the storm erupted and they reached the final hurdle, the steep mountain.

“When you pass through this valley, you will see the Nakujuk’s home.”

Guran shouted as they flew through the storm. The skyrays quickly passed through the valley where sharp rocks rising out of the ground. And just as they were leaving the valley, a loud shriek was heard above them.

Kurwarwarwarwa-!

Guran reflexively lifted his head and paled.

“D-Drakens.....!”

“The attack is coming. Move!”

Two Drakens shot towards their party. Ark quickly pulled the reins and stopped the skyray. Then the claws of the Draken passed right by him. Guran also sharply turned and avoided the Draken’s attack.

"Damn, I never thought I would be attacked in this situation."

Ark glanced around him. In order to avoid the lightning, they had flown downwards towards the valley with sharp rocks. Now there was no space to land on the ground. In other words, he had to fight against the Draken in the air! But it wasn't easy to ride the skyray, let alone swing his sword properly.

"I have no choice but to try. Dedric, while I deal with this guy, go and distract the other one so that it doesn't attack Guran and the pigs!"

"M-me?"

"Isn't that obvious? Just hold on until I'm done!"

Ark yelled and flew towards the Draken.

"Dark blade!"

Ark wrapped the reins around his body and swung Gwisal's blade. However, this was the sky and it wasn't difficult for the Draken to avoid his attacks. This aerial combat would be more difficult than he thought. Unlike the ground, it could suddenly narrow the distance at a tremendous speed before increasing the distance again. Attacking when the gap was only 1 metre was more difficult than he thought. And while he had been riding Radun, his 'Riding' skill was still only beginner level. It was hard to control the skyray and catch the timing to attack. On the other hand, the Draken could freely attack Ark while flying through the sky.

Snap!

The Draken's claw scratched his shoulder and he immediately lost some health. But the problem wasn't his health. Draken now knew Ark's weak point. It was the skyray! Draken quickly turned around and attacked the skyray. After a few minutes, the wings of the skyray were severely ravaged and torn.

"Ugh.....I won't be able to survive in this situation!"

The wounded skyray struggled to stay in the sky. One of its wings was almost torn off and its altitude gradually decreased. After two more attacks, the skyray screamed and started falling. Ark completely lost control of it and the Draken immediately rushed towards Ark.

Kurwarwarwarwa-!

'Oh my God!'

Ark felt dizzy looking at the fangs rapidly approaching. If he fell into the valley where the sharp rocks emerged like needles, it would be the end. At that moment, Ark instinctively took out the saw blade. Then he swung the whip towards Draken. The whip wrapped around the Draken's fangs and Ark kicked the skyray's head and flew into the sky.

Kwadududuk!

The skyray was crushed in the Draken's mouth. Meanwhile, Ark used the whip like a rope to climb onto the Draken's back.

'This bastard, it thinks it can fly around freely?'

Ark squeezed the Draken's neck with his legs and changed weapons to Gwisal's sword.

"Take this, Demonic Opening. Dark Blade!"

Kurwarwarwarwa-!

After Ark used Dark Blade, Gwisal's sword was buried between the sensitive ears! The Draken yelled and rampaged like crazy, trying to throw him off. After a few seconds, gravity grabbed hold of his body and he started to slip. However, Ark was already crazy. He bent his neck backwards while trying to grab on and stabbed the head. The continuous backstab steadily drained the Draken's health. After it fell into a critical condition.....he used Gwisal's sword to slit its throat. A tremendous amount of blood poured out like a waterfall. The Draken reflexively flapped its wings and struggled to stay in the sky like a headless chicken.

-Your level has risen.

In the midst of it, he also gained one level.

"Aaargh, M-Master! I'm dying! Ack!"

On the one hand, Dedric had lured the remaining Draken and was currently dying. Although Guran was steering the skyray and trying to help him, the situation was still dire. Dedric was in a critical condition, while the wings of the skyrays that Guran and the baby pigs were tattered and barely hanging on.

"Aaaaah, help me!"

Even in this situation, Buksil showed his professionalism and turned the magic projector on. However.....Ark was also falling down with the Draken. It was truly a desperate situation!

“Radun, pick up Draken’s items.”

In these circumstances, Ark still didn’t forget about the items. Radun flicked its tongue and collected the items on Draken’s body.

“Dedric, fly towards me!”

“U-understood! Ack, it is coming!”

Dedric approached Ark with the Draken chasing close behind him. At that moment, Ark flew towards Dedric and the approaching Draken.

“Eh? M-Master.....stepping on my back.....that’s impossible.....ugh!”

Ark used Dedric’s head like a stepping stone and landed on the back of the chasing Draken. The situation that unfolded was similar to before. He grabbed onto the Draken’s neck using his legs and used Dark Blade like crazy! The health of the Draken quickly became low. But this guy was braver (?) than the first Draken. When it fell into a critical condition, it immediately shot towards the needle valley. Instead of having its throat slit by Ark, it chose being impaled by rocks as its method of death.

“Ark-nim-!”

Guran screamed and flew towards him. However, the Draken was already about to hit the ground!

“I’m not going to die together with a guy like you!”

Ark grabbed the Draken’s head and turned it. The Draken instinctively opened its mouth and bit Ark’s hand. No, it actually bit Ark’s sparkling sword.

“You stupid lizard, Riposte!”

He used counter attack against the fangs! Then his chain skill Riposte was activated. It pushed the enemy back 10 metres. But when Ark unwound his legs from the neck, he was pushed back and thrown into the air. On the other hand, the Draken accelerated and crashed into the ground at an even greater speed.

Kurwarwarwarwa-!

The needle like rocks skewered the Draken.

“Ark-nim. Here!”

Guran finally reached him and shouted as he stretched out his hand. Ark grabbed the hand and Guran looked at him with admiration and respect.

Ark just gave a sigh of relief and climbed onto the skyray. The skyray had its wings torn by the Draken so it was difficult for the stingray to carry 2 people. No, even without Ark, Guran and the pig’s skyrays were gradually flying lower.

“Please just hold on a little bit more. Once we leave the valley then it’ll be the Nakujuk’s home!”

Ark used ‘Nursing’ to help the skyrays regain some strength. And it spread its wings to glide for a little bit.....and they finally escaped the sharp valley. Then he saw a huge building with some demonic statues.

“We did it! It’s the home of the Nakujuk clan!”

The place that Guran pointed to was a building with a strange architecture. It looked like a tower built underground..... A hole was drilled into the hill like a huge crater. And the buildings were arranged around the edge and spiralled underground. Looking from the sky, he could see an altar deep underground.

‘This is the destination?’

That was what Ark thought. The skyray suddenly fell out of the sky and crashed into the ground. Fortunately, the skyray used the last of its power thanks to Ark’s nursing and managed to avoid giving them any fall damage. When Ark got off the skyray, a message window appeared in front of him.

Abyss of Despair

After passing through the sharp valley, you have arrived at the Nakujuk’s home. This place is called the Abyss of Despair and it used to be the Holy City before the Nakujuk came. But the Nakujuk caused bloodshed and carnage. The tragic history of the Holy City is evidenced by the bloody smell that permeates this place. Even those armed with sword and shield cannot be assured in the Land of the Dead. To enter here, tenacity is needed more than courage.

<Explorer’s Knowledge: New dungeon discovered bonus (Skill points: 10)>

“Phew.....this seems to be the destination.”

Ark ignored the threatening demon statues and took out his pot. After releasing Deimos' transformation, Ark cooked a variety of dishes to restore the health and mana of Ark and his pets, as well as increase their stats in preparation for the dungeon. There was no time. He couldn't afford to hesitate.

"Let's go, now it is time for the real threat."

Chiing.....

Once again the magic projector was busily filming behind Ark.

"Flash!"

A ray of light shot through a group of Nakujuk warriors. 10 Nakujuk instantly had their health decreased. Not only did the Nakujuk lose some health, they also became 'Frozen' and had their movements slowed. It was the 'Flash' and 'Elemental Sword' combo attack.

"Now, Dedric, Deimos. Gather all of them in one place!"

"Okay! Over here stupid!"

Clack clack clack clack!

Dedric and Deimos gathered the Nakujuk into a corner. Deimos' shield was quite effective in cornering an opponent.

Daeng kang!

When Deimos hit them with the shield, the Nakujuk wobbled and retreated. In fact, normally Deimos' focus in a battle was more defensive than offensive. His offense wasn't high and he needed to block any attacks when Ark plunged into a group. While protecting Ark's back, he normally prevented any enemies from escaping. But using a shield to block also needed its own tricks. He had to effectively use the shield in order to cut off an enemy's retreat. And after repeating those sorts of battles, Deimos finally realized the trick of using a shield.

You pet 'Deimos' has manifested the ability of a Skeleton Knight.

Shield Stroke (Beginner, Passive): Deimos has inherited Skeleton Knight Warwick's abilities. After accumulating more experience, he will have the opportunity to learn Warwick's diverse skills. One of the most basic techniques is using the shield to strike an enemy.

<Damage to enemies when using Shield Stroke +20%. When pushing an enemy, +10% chance to trigger stiffness>

While Dedric awakened his vampire ability after fighting Dunphil, Deimos awakened the power of a Skeleton Knight. Perhaps if he awakened more skills then Ark would be able to utilize him more in a battle. Therefore, Deimos became more aggressive in a fight after he evolved. Since Ark insisted on him defending, 'Shield Stroke' was the first offensive skill Deimos learned. However, Ark didn't care even when he learnt the skill. Honestly, Ark felt like the skill he had learnt after much difficulty was quite trivial. He didn't need to push an enemy with the shield skills. When Deimos used the skill, his damage only increased by a little bit and there was a 10% chance of causing stiffness. It was also a basic skill for anyone with the warrior profession.

'Still, any attack skill would be helpful at the moment.'

Deimos went around hitting the Nakujuk with his shield. Normally their speed would be too fast to follow, but after 'Frozen' stacked up many times, their movement speed was at the lowest possible.

"That's it. Radun, sword! Blade Storm!"

The sword in Ark's hands exploded. The sharp sword fragments wrapped around the Nakujuk, causing a whirlwind. The Nakujuk were struck and collapsed one after the other. Only 4 Nakujuk barely survived.

"Demonic Opening!"

Kiiyaaaaaak-!

A piercing wail emerged as Demonic Opening was used. Thanks to the enormous damage, the Nakujuk couldn't hold out and eventually died. It was an amazing skills parade! The scene was repeated dozens of times. The Abyss of Despair was home to a large number of Nakujuk. He came across as little as 10 and as much as 30 troops at one time. In addition, the distance between troops was small so he other ran into other troops while fighting.

'I have to lure a suitable number and take care of them with a lightning fast battle.'

He urgently moved forward. Whenever he thought of Lariette, Ark became more urgent and proceeded quicker into the dungeon.

‘I should avoid fighting too many enemies.’

Therefore Ark used ‘Stealth’ to wander around. The structure of the dungeon twisted like a pretzel and led downwards. It was a simple structure but the inside was complicated like a maze. Since he couldn’t see around the corner, there might be a unit of Nakujuk warriors waiting there. In order to figure out the terrain, he hid using ‘Stealth’ and checked every corner to see if there was a unit. Once he figured out the terrain and enemy placement, he used Dedric. Dedric was excellent at provoking using his ‘Taunt’ skill! If two units were too close to each other than Dedric would lure one away. Then Ark and Deimos would block their escape.

“Guran, Buksil, Sapjil, stay in the corner!”

“Yes, yes!”

The three of them immediately went to the corner and Flash was used. Ark used Flash three or four times. It wasn’t just Flash. It was the combo of Elemental Sword with the ice attribute and Flash! Using that combo, the group instantly lost 40~50% health. Then he followed up with the incredible damage of Blade Storm or Demonic Opening. A truly powerful combination! Of course, using so many skills immediately made his mana drop to the bottom after each battle. But he had a surplus of food so it was no problem. In addition, didn’t he have Umma’s Sap to restore health in an emergency? Thanks to that, Ark had no obstacles. It was possible to do down to the 20th floor of the basement in only 1 hour.

‘There’s only 3 more floors to go down.’

Ark was able to confirm this thanks to a balcony in the middle of the floor. While flying on the skyray, he knew that the altar was on the bottom floor. And there were iron doors on either side of the square. Bona and Lariette were probably trapped somewhere behind the doors. And because of the difficulty of the quest, there was likely to be a boss.

‘It doesn’t matter if I just jump off here, but I have to take care of the Nakujuk or else they might attack me from behind.’

“Okay, you can put away the corpses.”

Guran and the little pigs began to clean up. Since it was an enemy’s stronghold, sometimes Ark would randomly come across people patrolling. If they saw bodies then the enemy troops would attack from behind. Therefore he needed to hide the

bodies at an appropriate place. In the meantime, Ark checked his equipment and used maintenance where needed.

‘I got quite a bit of experience and items from handling those troops.’

Since he killed an average of twenty people at once, his experience shot up like crazy. In addition, he used Drastic Measures approximately 50% of the time and got an extra 1.4 experience. Thanks to that, he raised his level several times in a few hours.

Character Name	Ark	Race	Human
Alignment		Good +350	
Fame	9,075 (+500)	Level	242
Profession		Dark Walker	
Title		Cat Knight, Caretaker of the Battlefield, Jackson’s Hero, Great Adventurer	
Health	3,795 (+150)	Mana	3,985
Spiritual Power	200	Strength	460 (+28)
Agility	620 (+55)	Stamina	710 (+20)
Wisdom	85 (+10)	Intelligence	768
Luck	100 (+30)	Flexibility	92
Art of Communication	46	Affection	131 (+10)
Resilience	276		
Special stat: Knowledge of Ancient Relics		138	
* Equipment item effects			
Guardian Armour of the Merpeople: Water Attribute Resistance +100%, Penalty based on water is nullified.			
Cat Paws (Gloves): Attack Speed +10%, Agility +15, Critical Hit +10%			

Raccoons Pith (Helmet): Agility + 10, Wisdom + 10

*<King> Set effect: Strength + 10, Agility + 10, Stamina +10, Defense +20

Warrior's Transcripts (Shoulder Blades): Strength + 3

Wind Spirit's Boots (Shoes): Agility + 30, Movement Speed +30%, Attack Speed +10%, 'Slide' available

Galgashi's Fur (Mantle): Cold resistance +100%, Agility +20, When health is less than 50%, 'Magic Protection' automatically activates.

Adelaine's Necklace (Necklace): Defense + 40, Affection +10, 'Blessing of the Sea' available

Resurrecting Spirit (Ring): Strength + 5, Mana recovery + 5%

Mind's Eye (Ring): 'Mind's Eye' enabled

Amulet of Vitality (Bracelet): Health + 50, Health recovers by 5 every 20 seconds

Gladiator's Honour (Bracelet): Strength, Agility, Stamina +10, Fame +500, Sword-based Skill Growth +5%

* 40% increase all skills in the dark.

* You have the ability to hide in the darkness (20 minutes duration. Cancelled when you get into combat)

* Resistance to Fear, Darkness, Blind, and Seduction spells is increased by 50%.

* You can bring out the true abilities from all types of tools.

* Shock absorption is increased by 20%.

* Poison resistance has increased by 50%.

* Skill points: 10

Ark was level 242! When he applied the dark attribute bonus, he was level 338 which was a lot higher than the Nakujuk warriors. And 60% of his bag was already filled with japtem.

'I'll have to send one of those guys back soon.'

Ark glanced at Buksil who was turning on the magic projector. He had to protect them until then. Ark was also acting cautiously because of them. If he was alone then Ark would be able to escape, but it was impossible with Guran and the baby pigs.

"Well, wait here please. I'll go and scout the area."

"I understand."

Ark completed his maintenance and scouted around using 'Stealth.'

'That path leads down the 3 floors.....it should take 10 minutes to reach the bottom.'

Dong, dong, dong, dong!

Then, there was the loud ringing of a drum. Ark felt his heart suddenly fall.

'What, what the?' Has a patrol found the corpses?'

The problem he was worried about occurred. If they found the dead bodies then the entire dungeon will enter emergency mode. The monsters would become more alert and the battles more difficult. In some cases, all the monsters in the dungeon would gather where the bodies were discovered.

'Damn, how many times have I told them to put it away carefully.....'

Ark was torn about what to do.

"Oooh, it is time for the ceremony."

"Tamura-nim has called us."

"Gather all the soldiers around the altar."

The Nakujuk clan rushed down the stairs.

'Ceremony? What is going on?'

Anyway, the situation he was concerned about hadn't happened. But clearly something else was occurring. Ark immediately looked down at the altar from a balcony.

"We finally caught up."

Jewel muttered as she stood in front of the demonic statues.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes, there's no doubt. He's in this dungeon."

Jewel checked the radar of Mana Perfume and nodded. The red dot in the middle of the screen blinked and a grid was drawn as a scale. Because Mana Perfume was applied to the Wind Spirit's Boots, the red dot indicated Ark's location. After entering the Netherworld, they moved in a straight line according to the radar and caught up with Ark.

"He descended the mountain and is at the bottom of this dungeon."

"There is only one exit as well."

"Now we've caught him."

Jewel, Duke and the Hermes members smirked as they looked at the entrance. They had only been in the Netherworld for a few days. Because they were using the radar to chase Ark, it was possible to move in a straight line and no wander. That didn't mean they had no trouble. Although it wasn't as much as Ark and the Three Pig Brothers, they also suffered in the Netherworld over the last few days. Because of that, they completely looked like beggars.

"Still, we were quite lucky."

"That stupid old man in the village. He just handed over the mounts once we said we were friends of Ark."

"Thanks to that, we've managed to catch up while he's still in the dungeon."

That's right. The reason they were able to catch up with Ark so fast was because of Beseutyu. When they looked for rumours about Ark in the village, Beseutyu came

running. And when they said they wanted to help Ark, he immediately lent them some skyrays. Then Duke spoke in a slightly uncomfortable voice.

“But isn’t it a little weird?”

“What?”

“We encountered quite a lot of monsters coming here.”

“So what?”

“So weren’t most of the monsters level 300? Moreover, isn’t this the lair of the Nakujuk? Then how could Ark get past all those monsters and enter the dungeon?”

“That old man said that he only lent 3 skyrays to Ark. His previous colleagues weren’t there. They must be people he helped in this dimension. No, that is obvious.”

Duke’s mouth twisted at the answer.

“He has two users with him. If we include the NPC then it is 3 people. Meanwhile we have 10 people. It shouldn’t be a problem. Since they’re colleagues of Ark, we can’t leave them alone.”

“It is like you said.”

Duke nodded. Apart from Jewel and Duke, there were 8 other members of the Hermes guild. Since their party had a combination of classes, they easily dealt with the groups of Nakujuk.

“That guy cleaned out most of the monsters in this dungeon. We just have to smash any of the remaining people.”

“I hope he hasn’t killed the boss yet.”

“I don’t care. As long as we catch Ark.”

Jewel laughed and took out a bunch of scrolls. The first thing they did when leaving Silvana was obtain some scrolls. [Robbery], [Seize], [Peek], [Unlucky].....all the scrolls were designed to steal items. Now all they had to do was kill him.

“Come on, let’s go. It is time to pay him back.”

So the group intent on stabbing Ark to death entered the Abyss of Despair.

'Phew.....How did this happen?'

Lariette sighed and looked around. She was trapped in a carriage with dozens of the dead stared at the sky. Lariette stared at one of the deceased.

'This must be him.'

She knew the identity of this deceased person. The reason she came to the Netherworld was because of the boy ghost. Thanks to Alan, she had to go to the Netherworld to rescue the soul of the Holy Knight.....at the gravestone, the boy ghost said that he would guide her to where the Holy Knight was. So she saw the deceased in front of her as soon as she entered the Netherworld. She could recognize the ghost of the Holy Knight with one look. Unlike the other deceased, he had a beautiful silver necklace hanging from his neck. But he remained silent no matter how much she used 'Sensitive Soul.' He just wandered around while drooling. Eventually, Lariette had no choice but to follow him. She didn't know what would happened if he died because of monsters. So it was the first time she fought to protect others in the game. Therefore there were many things she had to learn that she was unaware of. But luckily, there were only wild animals in the forest that the dead were wandering around. Of course, some of them were strong monsters so she had to run away but she also learned new skills and raised her level. Then the Nakujuk clan came hunting the dead and caught her.

'Now what?'

Sob, Sob.

Then, she heard some helpless cries from the side. After she was caught, a little boy was also captured.

"I'm afraid. I miss my grandfather."

"It's okay, it'll be okay."

Lariette soothed the boy as she hugged him.

“But my grandfather called the Nakujuk the most brutal of the Myutal clans. We’ll be eaten.”

“No it won’t. Didn’t you see? There are people trying to rescue us. That person won’t leave us like this. He’s probably already close by. No, I have no doubt that he is near.”

“R-really?”

“Yes, that person.....he is really strong.”

Lariette smiled brightly as she said that. Then, there was the sound of drums and the iron doors opened.

‘What on earth? This seems bad.....’

In the meantime, Ark had been looking down at the altar from the balcony. There were 200 members of the Nakujuk clan congregating around the altar. Then like a cult, the Nakujuk all bowed on the ground and chanted.

“Tamura!”

“The absolute Myutal!”

At that time, the iron doors on one side of the altar opened and someone emerged. It was a 10 metre giant. The giant wearing a robe crossed to the altar and shook a stick made of bone. Then he lifted back his hood, revealing red eyes and raised his stick.

“Finally the time has come!”

A red warning message floated in front of Ark.

-The boss monster, Master Necromancer ‘Tamura’ has appeared!

‘Boss monster!’

Just like he expected, there was a boss monster in the Abyss of Despair. Level 500. It would be a tough battle. Anyway, Tamura brandished his cane and made a grand speech.

“We have been living in the darkness for a long time. But now, our period of suffering and perseverance has ended. Today the power of the great darkness will be awakened! Using this power, the Nakujuk will once again rule the Netherworld.”

“Oh, Tamura!”

“In order to obtain the power to rule the Netherworld, we must grasp it using the Festival of Blood and Flesh! Then no one will be able to stop us! Behold, this is the crystal that contains the true darkness! The form of the God that we serve!”

Tamura forcefully struck the floor with his cane. Then a small area of the square disappeared. A form emerged from the endless darkness.....the dark shape moaned and began to squish together. An incredibly ominous aura swirled in the square. Tamura raised his head and looked at the sky through the open ceiling.

“Today is the first day of complete darkness to occur in 10 years! Even the celestial gods are swallowed by the darkness. This is the perfect opportunity to resurrect the darkness! Now, prepare the sacrifices!”

‘Huk, that is.....!’

Ark abruptly flinched. The doors on the other side opened and the Nakujuk came in dragging 30 carriages. The deceased were trapped inside the carriage. And somewhere in the midst, the carriage that the Draken kidnapped contained Lariette and Bona.

“Start!”

At Tamura’s command, one of the carriages fell into a hole. After a moment, the black spirit bubbled up and swallowed them. With a violent sound, the dead people melted down and were absorbed in the darkness. At the same time, the aura became even more sinister.

‘What, what the? How am I going to do this?’

Ark became baffled. If he left Bona and Lariette trapped then they would soon fall inside the pit. Ideally he wanted to save Lariette but Bona was the more urgent problem. Although Lariette could resurrect, Bona was a NPC. If he died then the

quest would fail. But he couldn't just blindly jump into the square. There were 200 Nakujuk and the boss. No matter how strong he was, it wasn't possible for Ark alone.

'Dammit, why did he appear before I killed all the Nakujuk?'

After looking at the situation, it was obvious that Tamura appeared after certain conditions. This condition was probably midnight on New Year's Eve. If he had killed all the Nakujuk before Tamura appeared then it might be possible to fight him. But now he had to deal with 200 Nakujuk and the boss monster.

'Now I know why this is a B ranked quest. It is a party quest!'

Ark became gloomy. Did he have to give up on the quest and Lariette even though he came all the way here? It was at that time. Suddenly he stumbled and a warning message appeared.

- 'Stealth' has been released thanks to a Ranger's 'Sixth Sense.'

- You have received a critical hit from 'Precise Shot.' Damage 400! <Under the 'Bleeding' status, you will receive 30 damage every 10 seconds for 3 minutes>

'Huk, what, what the?'

Ark panicked and turned his head.

"As I expected, 'Sixth Sense' turned it off."

"Ark.....No, isn't it Dark Wolf?"

"Since you're alone, have all your colleagues died? How disgraceful, peeping while hiding your form....."

Ark became even more confused.

"Y-you.....what are you guys doing here?"

"Did you think you would never see us again?"

Amazingly, it was Duke, Jewel and some of the Hermes guild lined up behind Ark. Of course, Ark realized that those guys would track him down someday. But he could just move to another kingdom to get away. He never imagined that he would see them so soon. Jewel didn't give him time to think as she said.

"You're finished now!"

"I'll teach you the price of messing around with Hermes! Target Ark!"

Jewel activated all the scrolls at once.

-The [Unlucky] scroll has been applied.

-The [Robbery] scroll has been applied.....

10 warning messages appeared.

'Oh my god! A scroll combination.....!'

Ark felt a chill go down his spine. Ark understood the power of the scroll combination more than anyone else. He had almost become a beggar when Andel used it on him. If he got caught then the quest would be unrecoverable. And no matter how strong he was, he stood no chance against Jewel, Duke and 8 of the Hermes members.

'I'm not the same as before. If there were 5 Hermes members then I might be able to handle it. But I can't deal with the 10 of them including Jewel and Duke. I have to run away!'

As soon as the idea appeared, his body automatically moved. Ark was standing on the balcony. If he made one wrong move then he would be surrounded by 200 Nakujuk and the boss. The only way out was the corridor Jewel was blocking!

"Dark Dance!"

Ark immediately used the skill and plunged between the gaps. Although the speed of Flash was overwhelmingly faster, Dark Dance was better for defense.

"Not a chance!"

Duke lowered his stance and used 'Rapid Fire.'

"Slide!"

"Damn, son of a bitch!"

Ark used 'Slide' to avoid the arrows. Duke's face contorted angrily. While Ark was avoiding the attacks, Jewel boosted her magic 'Mana Explosion' and shot a fireball.

"Now. Flash!"

Ark wrapped his mantle around him and headed straight for the fireball.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Jewel had calculated the gap and used a fireball. She used fire magic because the damage was reliable. But when Ark rushed forward using 'Flash,' the fireball exploded in front of Jewel. The narrow corridor was swallowed with flames and Jewel and her allies received the full brunt of the damage. Even with Ark's 75% fire resistance, he still received 400 damage. Those guys didn't have fire resistance and received double the damage. Thanks to the damage also inflicted by Ark's continuous use of Flash, they quickly lost 30% of their health. However, someone used recovery magic and they recovered 10% instantly.

'Damn, they have a magician, ranger, warrior and clerics. Their party is prepared.'

"Ugh, how impertinent.....kill him!"

Jewel ordered and they rushed forward in formation. However, Ark blindly used his skills and stopped their approach. He managed to penetrate their encirclement and make an escape route. Ark took out some Nadingka's fruits from his pocket and threw them. When they touched the bodies, vines sprouted around Jewel and her party.

"Eh? What is this?"

"Sprint!"

At the same time, Ark started to run away on the other side and never looked back.

"Catch him!"

"Damn, Freedom from Chains!"

A shaman shook off the vines using recovery magic. However, Ark used Sprint and had already disappeared from their sight. Fortunately, Ark had already handled most of the monsters and the remaining Nakujuk were surrounding the altar so there was no one to block him. But it only lasted for a few moments. Although he used Sprint and knew the dungeon, he couldn't outrun their pursuit. No matter how complicated the path, Jewel always managed to catch up.

'I'm using the map created by my 'Cartography' skill.....so how do they know the way? In addition, they're accurately chasing in the right direction. No, how did they manage to track me through the Netherworld to this dungeon?'

Even though they shadowed him, the Three Pig Brothers had managed to lose Ark for a while in the Netherworld. So how had they found Ark so quickly? Even if they came to the Netherworld before Ark, it didn't explain how they found him.

'They're clearly using a method I don't know about. Something to find out my location.....what is it? The [Track] scroll doesn't detect outside a certain distance.....no, they have something that works well on me.....wait, perhaps?'

Ark briefly stopped and took off the boots.

'It has to be something to do with these shoes!'

"Discerning Eye!"

He used Discerning Eye to look at the information window.

-Wind Spirit's Boots has been cursed with Mana Perfume.

<Items cursed with Mana Perfume radiate a unique wavelength. This wavelength allows the user to track items cursed with Mana Perfume>

'Indeed.....!'

If something difficult to understand was encountered in New World, it was most likely because of a skill.

'Not just unidentified items. I should also check items taken from other people. Damn, I never thought there was this skill. But I can cleanse the curse using Purification Restoration.'

Ark was already cornered. Getting rid of the curse wouldn't help him escape the crisis. Still, it would be better than broadcasting his location while running away. But just as he was about to use Purification Restoration, an idea popped into his head.

'Wait, they can find my location using the boots. Then.....this might be a chance. Okay, with my low mana I wouldn't be able to evade them with Sprint anyway. This is the only way to escape the crisis.'

Ark used Sprint to return to the room where Guran was hiding.

"Ark-nim, you're safe."

"We were worried when we heard the strange pounding drums!"

"I don't have time to explain in more detail. Sapjil, please write a contract!"

Ark hastily handed over his items when he received the contract. Then he looked carefully at the surroundings and said.

"There's no time. Run to the place I told you to!"

"Yes, but what's going on....."

"There is no time to explain. You'll know later so just run!"

When Ark raised his voice, Sapjil became surprised and immediately ran. When Ark confirmed that he was running, Ark gave a wicked smile and handed Dedric the boots.

"Dedric, follow Sapjil while carrying this."

"This way!"

Jewel looked at the radar and ran.

"Damn, he's pretty fast. That bastard!"

"But he won't be able to keep up that speed forever."

"And he still hasn't noticed my magic. What a foolish guy, he must be hiding somewhere. Since earlier, his dot hasn't moved. Does he think we can't find him if he's hiding?"

Jewel murmured and smirked. Ark had stopped for a while but now he started moving again. However the speed wasn't as fast as before.

"He's finally run out of mana. It's not far so we can catch up!"

Jewel and her party chased after the red dot. And how long did they run for? After turning a corner, they heard the sound of footsteps running away. The Nakujuk were gathered so the only ones left were Ark and Jewel's group. Jewel tracked the red dot closely and saw that it went back to the balcony where they first met.

"Hah, trying to hide in the dark? But it won't be enough to fool me. Ark!"

"Huk!"

Ark who was hiding at the end of the balcony turned around and panicked. No, the person with a frightened face wasn't Ark. It was the dwarf merchant, Sapjil.

"What, what the? Who are you?"

"It makes no sense.....the radar clearly shows....."

Then, Jewel's eyes saw the bat flapping behind Sapjil. The bat was firmly holding the boots.....the Wind Spirit's Boots with Mana Perfume on it.

"Oh my god, did he notice? So where is Ark.....?"

"Here I am you damn bastards!"

Ark's voice was heard behind them. Jewel and Duke flinched and turned around.

"You guys can go through some trouble on my behalf. Radun, go!"

Ssak ssak ssak!

"What, what the! This lizard is?"

Radun turned into Radunma and rushed towards Jewel's group. Jewel and her companions were gathered in groups of 2~3 and completely filled the narrow corridor. Thanks to the blockage, they were literally pushed towards one direction. The warriors tried to swing their swords.....but it was a stupid idea.

"Riposte!"

Ark used Riposte to counterattack. The group was shoved towards Sapjil at the end of the balcony and they all fell overboard. Since it was only 3 levels, the fall damage wasn't that high. However.....they fell with a large crash and the eyes of the 200 Nakujuk and Tamura concentrated on them.

"Who are they?"

Tamura's face hardened.

"How dare you interfere with the sacred rituals.....kill them! Tear them down and offer them as sacrifices!"

"Ooh oh oh oh!"

The Nakujuk clan stood up and rushed forwards.

"Huk, run away!"

"We're already surrounded. There's no way to run!"

"Hang in there! We can't die without killing Ark!"

Jewel and her group used magic and skills to attack the Nakujuk. So the battle between the 10 Hermes members and the Nakujuk took place. And Sapjil who also fell was killed by the Nakujuk at the beginning of the fight.

"Sob, Sapjil....."

Buksil turned on the magic projector and recorded the noble (?) end.

'Now there's only 1 left of the Three Pig Brothers.'

His sacrifice was necessary to deceive Jewel.

"Master, take it."

Then Dedric flew closer holding the boots.

"Huhuhu, such crude methods suits someone like you."

Ark cleansed the boots using Purification Restoration. The skill ended up being in his favour. If they chased after Ark using the [Track] skill then he wouldn't be able to use such a wonderful trick. Thanks to those guys, the fight against the 200 Nakujuk wasn't so hopeless anymore.

"Fortunately Bona and Lariette are still safe. Guran, Buksil, come along."

Ark led his group and descended towards the altar.

Act 9: Innocence Knight

“Mana Explosion! Magic Harmony! Go, Blizzard! Hellfire!”

Kwa kwa kwa bang.

When Jewel used the skills, fire and ice emerged from both hands. The Nakujuk to one side were engulfed in ice while the other side was burnt by the flames. It was a display of high levelled magic that swirled around the area!

“Magic arrow, Arrow Shower!”

Duke also continuously shot magic arrows into the sky. The shower of arrows normally only seen in movies hit the Nakujuk surrounded by flames. Thanks to the strong wide area skills, the Nakujuk in that area quickly lost 50% of their health. Then the 6 warriors rushed forward swinging their swords.

“Heroic Strike!”

“Warrior’s Strength!”

The Nakujuk fell one after the other thanks to the wave of sword attacks. Indeed, the Hermes guild showed increased strength and organization. However, there were 200 opponents. Jewel and Duke, the two pioneers used their strongest skill’s and killed around 30 of the opponents, but the Nakujuk quickly filled the vacant spots.

“Kill them!”

“Death to the foreigners who dared to interfere with the sacred rituals.”

No matter how much they tried, the numbers did not decrease.

“Ugh.....in a place like this.....”

“To die without resolving the guild’s feud.....it is vexing!”

The shamans and clerics used recovery magic continuously and eventually ran out of mana. Eventually, 2 warriors were unable to cope with their wounds and collapsed. The remaining warriors decided to focus on attack and removed their shields but the situation was still the same.

“Feel the wrath of the darkness! Touch of Darkness!”

Then, a dark hand fell out of the sky onto one of the warriors. The warrior's face drained like a mummy as he instantly lost all his health. Tamura who had been watching finally decided to use his magic. With the addition of Tamura's magic, Jewel's party started collapsing.

"Damn, I can't die like this. Volcano!"

Jewel was persistent and used her most powerful spell. The earth cracked open and rocks shot out, striking the Nakujuk. Once again the Nakujuk suffered a devastating blow but Jewel's mana became low. Meanwhile, Duke had been surrounded by the Nakujuk and eventually died.

"Ugh.....If only I had my Wind Spirit's Boots....."

Anyway, he died with a lot of regrets.

"Duke-! Damn, Ark.....you, you bastard.....!"

"Jewel-nim, we've run out of mana....."

"Hang in there, we can't just die like this!"

"Kuaaaak!"

The gleam of the sword and blood! Cries and screams! The blazing fire magic! It was truly a bloody and spectacular battle.

"Lululala....."

But Ark didn't pay it that much attention. While everyone's gaze was on the battlefield, Ark hummed and sang as he strolled among the carriages.

"Hey, who are you?"

One of the Nakujuk standing by the carriages lifted his sword. While the majority of the Nakujuk were fighting Jewel's group, there were only 10 Nakujuk guarding the carriages.

"A warrior of justice, what else?"

Ark cheerfully swung Gwisal's sword. And the fated reunion took place.

"The angle and situation looks good.....action!"

After Buksil gave the signal, Ark and Guran ran to the carriage.

"Lariette-nim!"

"Bona-nim!"

"Ark-nim!"

Lariette had been standing close to the bars and watching the battle.

"Please wait a moment. I'll open it immediately."

Ark unlocked the carriage using the key he found in Hagel Forest. Then Bona and the deceased trapped in the carriage came pouring out. Guran ran forward and hugged Bona tightly.

"Bona-nim!"

"G-Guran! Sob, Guran! I was scared."

"I'm really sorry. I couldn't protect you....."

Yes, it was definitely a touching sight. But why didn't he hear the sound of his quest completing?

Finally, Lariette left the carriage and approached Ark. She stared at him with mixed emotions before she blushed and started speaking.

"You've come. I knew you would."

"Of course I came."

Although more than half of his decision was because of the quest. However, Ark knew enough not to mention that in this situation. He was playing the role of a knight rescuing a princess from danger. Although he got goose bumps from the idea, the major projector was filming so he whole heartedly portrayed it.

"I would never leave Lariette-nim in a horrible place like this."

And Lariette was suitably impressed.

"To go so far just for me.....!"

"I have a lot of things I'd like to ask and also some things I want to inform you of, but the detailed talk will have to come later. Right now, my 'friendly' colleagues are taking care of them but I don't know how long they'll last. Guran, Buksil! Take Lariette and Bona to a safe place."

"Yes, I understand." Bona-nim, Lariette-nim. Follow me."

Guran nodded and went up to the 2nd floor. However, Lariette just looked anxiously at Ark.

"Ark-nim isn't coming?"

"I have work to do. How can I just run away leave that guy who tried to sacrifice Lariette, Bona and other innocents alone? Even if it ends in tragedy, I have to punish him."

Ark lifted his sword and spoke in a determined voice. Bona was saved so there would be no problem with quest completion even if he ran away. But Ark couldn't be satisfied with just completing the quest.

'Are you crazy? How can I just leave without attempting to catch the boss? In addition, he is a boss monster where certain conditions have to be met for him to appear! He would likely drop more than one rare item. Even if I die, I'll just revive in the Valley Town!'

That was Ark's true purpose. But he couldn't show his greed since people might end up watching the video. Lariette hesitated before making up her mind.

"Okay. Then I'm going to help as well."

"Huh? Lariette-nim?"

"Yes, it's a request. Please let me help Ark-nim."

".....I understand." But please focus on supporting me from behind with your magic."

He intended to use the 'Flash' technique like before. However, the thought 'I can't put Lariette in danger' was present in the back of his mind.

'So far I've only troubled Ark-nim by helping Alan.....but he has been thinking well of me since the interview.....! In addition, those colleagues sacrificed their lives for Ark-nim.....that is different from Alan, with Dawn Blade disbanding as soon as he was in a crisis. Ark-nim is just like I imagined!'

Lariette interpreted the situation in this wrong way thanks to her misunderstanding.

"As expected of Ark-nim....."

"Huh?"

"Oh, it's nothing. I'll be assisting Ark-nim from behind."

Lariette blushed and shook her head. While the drama was occurring between Ark and Lariette, Jewel's group was collapsing one by one. But they didn't go down without a fight.

"These bastards, I have to kill as much of them as possible before dying!"

A recovery shaman and Jewel were the only ones remaining.....and in the last 1 minute, Jewel began to chant a desperate spell. The Nakujuk gathered around and Jewel completed the spell just as the shaman restored her health.

"Hahaha, this is a pioneer's very last move, Self-destruct!"

Pepepepeng!

At that moment, Jewel's body exploded. The Nakujuk in the surrounding area quickly lost all of their health. Even the boss Tamura was pushed back a few metres by the explosion. Indeed, the name of a pioneer wasn't shamed by Jewel's last action. However, Jewel's fierce death was all in vain. If Jewel knew that Ark was aiming for this opportunity, the group probably wouldn't have fought against the Nakujuk. However, the number of Nakujuk was too much and they couldn't spot Ark among the crowd. Without knowing this face, Jewel just exploded and died.....

'The Hermes guild's party.....was more fantastic than I thought. Now it is possible to finish this!'

Ark used Eyes of the Cat to examine Tamura and the Nakujuk. The number of Nakujuk was reduced from 200 to 90. Jewel's group took care of 110 people. Furthermore, the remaining 90 Nakujuk had approximately 30% of their health left thanks to the wide area magic.

'This is indeed an experience field! I'll thankfully accept all the experience left behind!'

"Elemental sword, Fire attribute!"

Ark used the most destruction attribute and applied it to Gwisal's sword. While Ark was making preparations, Lariette also gave him some secondary protection.

"Sword Aura, Ghost Armour!"

The secondary magic boosted attack and defense!

"Lariette-nim, unleash a wide area magic on these guys!"

"Yes, Blades of wind, Tornado!"

Lariette's wind blades swept past the Nakujuk clan. However, Lariette's magic wasn't as strong as Jewel's. It only decreased the health of twenty Nakujuk by 5%.

"That is sufficient, let's go!"

Ark shot forward along with the wind magic.

"You dare.....!"

Tamura swung his cane and approached. But Ark's goal was not Tamura. Ark used Slide to avoid Tamura's cane and then shouted.

"Demonic Opening, Flash!"

At the moment the sword, a ray of light instantaneously penetrated the Nakujuk. All enemies within a 20 metre radius were hit by Flash! The remaining 90 Nakujuk were closely bunched up behind Tamura. When Flash penetrated that group, a tremendous amount of blood appeared and the ninety Nakujuk all had their health decreased. Ark used Flash twice in succession and Lariette also used her magic, causing twenty Nakujuk to collapse. And when he used Flash again along with the flames, the remaining people died. Using the skill 3 times annihilated 90 people! In addition, he successfully used Drastic Measures forty times.

-Your level has risen.....

He gained 2 levels just by killing the henchmen.

"A-awesome! This is the first time I've seen such a scene!"

Buksil was recording from the 2nd floor and had his mouth hanging open. Lariette also looked at Ark with an enraptured expression. She was not the only one surprised. Tamura could not believe his eyes and he looked at the sea of blood.

"Ugh, this is unbelievable.....!"

"Now, now it is your turn Tamura."

Ark released Demonic Opening and turned around. Demonic Opening should only be used when dealing with something quickly. Using it for a long time was detrimental to his health.

"Damn you, I'll crush your bones and eat your flesh!"

“How are you going to do that? Dedric, Deimos. It’s time for the main part!”

“Hehehe, I’ve been waiting for this!”

Clack clack clack clack!

Ark, Deimos and Dedric attacked Tamura from three different directions. When Tamura tried to chant a spell, Dedric clung to his face while Deimos stabbed him. Then Deimos bumped him sharply with the shield and the spell was released. At that moment.....!

“Radun, sword! Elemental Sword, Lightning!”

Ark used Elemental Sword and sparks gathered around the sword Radun gave him.

“Take this, Blade Storm!”

Kwa kwa kwa kwa!

The sword was crushed and the pieces swirled intensely in the air. However, this wasn’t a simple Blade Storm. Since it temporarily took on the lightning attribute thanks to Elemental Sword, lightning flashed among the debris.

“Kuaaak, this bastard!”

Tamura screamed as sparks hit his body. Tamura was a level 500 boss. But monsters that were magicians had low defense. Thanks to the various wide area magic from Jewel’s group, his health had already decreased to 40%. He then lost a further 10% thanks to the damage from Blade Storm.

‘Okay, I can win!’

But he couldn’t relax just yet. A magician had low defense and attack speed. But the reason many users preferred magicians was because of their incredible magic, which could change the situation with one attack.

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

Tamura started using his magic and it wasn’t a joke. When the cursed black fog of the Necromancer spread, he received incredible dark attribute and deadly poison damage. However, Ark possessed 100% resistance to the dark and 50% resistance to poison. It wasn’t an exaggeration to say that with his resistances, he was the natural enemy of dark magicians. But the black fog still dealt 300 damage. Also.....!

“Rise, Children of the darkness!”

Tamura spread out both arms and a dark aura emerged from them. Then the Nakujuk were resurrected as zombies. However, half of them were completely smashed or cut open by Ark. They only numbered 50 zombies. And they were revived with less than 50% of their health and stats.

"Damn, this is the special magic of the Necromancer? Flash!"

Ark used Flash and shattered the zombies. They only had 50% health, and the 50% of stats meant that their defense was incredibly low. Thanks to Flash, he severed them with one stroke and the zombies were converted to experience. However, Ark had 4,000 mana and it was running low because he used Flash continuously.

'It will become more disadvantageous the longer it takes. I have to make a prompt decision!'

"Dedric, don't stop disturbing him and prevent him from using magic!"

"Understood. Wait you bastard! Dark Dash!"

"Deimos, constantly strike him with Shield Stroke!"

Clack clack clack clack, daeng!

"Ugh, these guys are so annoying.....!"

The life of a magician was concentration. While it didn't do that much damage, both Deimos' and Dedric's techniques induced stiffness. It was minor but those disturbances slowed down the rate of his magic spells. Lariette also used her magic attacks.

"Ark-nim. It's dangerous. Thunderbolt!"

Lightning flew from Lariette's fingertips towards Tamura's nose.

Clack clack? Clack clack clack clack!

At that time, the wrong situation occurred. While Tamura stumbled, Deimos stood in front of Lariette and started talking to her. When Lariette became puzzled, Dedric translated for her.

"I can't attack Tamura's face?"

"What? What does that mean?"

"I don't know. Huk!"

Dedric shrugged before quickly avoiding Tamura's attack. He couldn't understand why Deimos said those words. But they had no time to worry about such a trivial matter when facing a boss.

'It's almost done!'

But Ark miscalculated. Tamura eventually fell into a critical condition.

"I can't believe this. Losing to this guy.....no! I can't die!"

Tamura rushed wildly towards Ark. Ark quickly used Slide and swung his sword. However, Ark wasn't Tamura's goal. He continued running forward and jumped into the pit of darkness. Then a massive black aura appeared from the pit.

"W-what is he doing.....?"

Did the boss monster commit suicide? Ark was devastated at the thought.

Ku-Kung!

Suddenly a black arm emerged from the pit. The wet hands soaked in sticky oil.....Tamura unexpectedly climbed up from the pit covered in a viscous black liquid. His red eyes turned towards Ark and he smiled. Dedric became freaked out and retreated.

"Hik, what is that?"

Tamura has absorbed the 'Evil Spirit Fragments' and has gained the Demonic attribute.

The protective coat protects Tamura by 500% while his abilities have increased by 100%. In addition, it invalidates the bonus damage of all skills. However, the demonic attribute is weak against weapons with the ability to exorcise evil spirits. These weapons will invalidate the special abilities of the protective coating.

<Demonic Attribute: According to legend, the demonic attribute was passed down by a malevolent deity. The demonic attribute is the most predominant among all evil attributes>

'Evil Spirit Fragments?'

'Huhuhu, power.....the power of darkness.....ruin.....destroy everything.....everything.....destroy.....!'

Tamura murmured as he lifted both hands.

"I feel unpleasant. Dedric, Deimos. Plan A!"

"Yes Master!"

Clack clack clack clack!

Ark, Dedric and Deimos tackled Tamura. Even if his stats were at 100%, he only had 10% health left. If they concentrated their attacks then the fight would be over in 1 minute. At that time, Tamura turned and struck a carriage with his stick. Then the trapped deceased started pouring out. Tamura snatched up one of the deceased and swallowed it. Then, little by little, his health was restored.

-Tamura has used the 'Life Absorb' skill.

<When swallowing and chewing an enemy, you can absorb some of their health>

'What, what the?'

Ark burst out with surprise. Now the boss who he almost caught was slowly recovering? What kind of absurd situation was this? Ark panicked and immediately attacked, but Tamura just withdrew and swallowed the rest of the deceased. Once his health had been restored to 30%, Tamura smashed another wagon.

'Oh my god.....what is this nonsense.....!'

Ark's face paled. Now he had no mana left. Ark's health was also at 30%. The stats of the boss was 100% and now he was slowly recovering his health? In addition, he could continue restoring his health with the remaining carriages.

"Dark blade!"

Ark panicked and used Dark Blade, but Tamura's health did not decrease at all. His demonic attribute overrode the additional damage of all his skills. Dark's Blade biggest strength was that it ignored all defense, but that made no difference with Tamura.

'If he manages to recover 100% health.....then it is the end. Somehow I must stop the recovery! But he doesn't even blink at my attacks.....although attacks with the Holy attribute can damage it, only the shamans and temple priests can use that attribute.....damn!'

Ark starting losing his spirit and stared at Tamura devastated.

‘Wait, perhaps there might be a way to stop the recovery!’

“Please come to your senses. Even if you’re dead, your lives are still valuable to this world. Don’t let your existences be eaten by an evil demon. Oppose the devil with your willpower and protect yourselves!”

Ark used the power of Nursing.

Pepeng-!

“Kuaaak.....!”

There was a white flash of light from Tamura’s mouth where he was chewing another deceased. Then instead of recovering his health, he received considerable damage and stumbled.

‘It is like I expected! I can use Nursing to stop his healing! No, I might even be able to defeat him!’

Tamura received damage after eating the deceased. This was due to the side effect of Ark’s Nursing. The additional effect of Nursing that Ark had forgotten about.....was the blessing. Blessings had a holy attribute. If he ate the dead who had a holy attribute, he would receive damage instead. They weren’t injured, so the deceased couldn’t receive the Nursing effect. However, Tamura had to chew on them in order to absorb life. At that moment, the dead became injured. Ark aimed for that moment and used Nursing. While avoiding Tamura’s attacks, he concentrated on the movements of the deceased. And the moment Tamura tried to swallow a deceased, Ark would stop the recovery using Nursing and Tamura would receive damage. He managed to stop the healing using Nursing three or four times. When he used Nursing once again, an intense light appeared around Ark’s body instead.

The Miracle Nursing was successful.

Your sincerity in regards to the dead had surpassed the limits of space and species.

Life has no ranks. Whether they be the kings who rules a kingdom or the stray beggars who wander the streets, all life is precious. Many people, even priests don’t realize this fact. But you have taken care of countless lives and realized this truth. Although the deceased are just wandering around the Netherworld, it is still their lives.

Abandoned by everyone, you are the only one who did not forsake the deceased! You have become an inspiration through your achievements and have received a

higher rank of caretaker.

* Due to the success of miracle nursing, all stats increase by 1.

* Affection increases by 10.

* Alignment towards Good increases by 50.

* The blessing effect is applied to all the deceased for 2 hours.

The Miracle Nursing was a success and you have acquired the title 'Caretaker of the Abandoned.'

Your fame as a Caretaker has increased, so you will receive praises from many patients.

* As a title bonus all stats will increase by 2.

* Fame increases by 50.

'This is truly a miracle!'

Due to the effects of Miracle Nursing, the blessing effect was applied to all the deceased. In other words, Tamura's food has been poisoned. Thanks to that, Tamura's recovery stopped at 50%. Although the recovery was stalled, the situation didn't become better. Tamura's demonic attribute was still nullifying his extra attacks and Ark had no more mana, so there was no way for him to attack.

"Ohhhh, this guy.....how dare you interfere with my meal.....!"

Tamura became furious at the interruption to his meal. Hundreds of black hands made of the vicious liquid formed around Tamura. Dozens of the deceased were suddenly caught by those hands. Then the deceased had all the health drained and they turned into ashes.

-Tamura has used 'Hand of Death!'

<When caught by the Hands of Death, they will lose 10 health every 1 second>

"Huk, what the? Slide! Deimos, Dedric! Avoid it!"

Ark shouted as he slid all over the place trying to avoid the hands. Fortunately Deimos and Dedric instinctively sensed the crisis and either dropped to the ground or flew in the sky to avoid the black hands. Thanks to that, only the deceased were turned to black powder. At that moment, something he never imagined

happened. The place Lariette was standing was out of reach of the black hands. But when a black hand reached towards a certain deceased standing near her, she shrieked and plunged forward.

“N-no!”

“La-Lariette-nim?”

Ark lifted his head in surprise. Instead of the deceased, Lariette was being held by Tamura’s hands. Lariette’s health quickly began to drain out. And her health reached the bottom in a blink of an eye.....!

Suddenly there was a blinding glare of light. Ark frowned and stared at the strange sight. The dead person who had been saved by Lariette was suddenly surrounded by a beam of light. Then a knight holding a sword and shield emerged from the light. He shot towards Tamura like an arrow while holding his sword thrust in front of him.

Booom!

Tamura stumbled from the attack and became stunned. Then the knight appeared next to Ark holding Lariette.

‘What the? What the hell is going on?’ Who is this guy?’

Ark couldn’t get a grasp on the situation. Then, Lariette muttered with a pale face.

“Holy Knight.....!”

“Holy Knight? What about a Holy Knight? Are you talking about Alan?”

Ark asked with a stupid face. However, the Knight just ignored Ark and spoke towards Lariette.

-Lady, with a pure heart like a white jade.....I pay my respects to your heartfelt sacrifice.

The Knight bowed his head before continuing.

-I am known as the Holy Knight Ronian. After the person I was soul linked fell into darkness, I was corrupted and became a nameless dead wandering the Netherworld. If it wasn’t for you, I would’ve been a deceased lost in the darkness forever.

“I received a request from your squire. So.....”

– I know. Johnny.....poor boy. It was because of Johnny's request that you found me. And you were willing to sacrifice yourself to keep your promise with that child. I've regained my sense of self because of you. I was desperate to overcome the darkness. But I couldn't win by myself.....

Ronian clenched his pendant with a pained expression and closed his eyes for a moment. But he soon opened them again and laughed.

-But you've allowed me to regain my hope after everything was lost. My spirit could return slightly thanks to that man's blessing. And you protected me with complete sincerity. By sacrificing yourself.....your beautiful heart was enough to completely awaken my spirit. Now that I've regained my will, I'll be able to return to heaven.

Ronian released the pendant before holding it out to Lariette.

-Beautiful maiden.....will you accept my legacy? If you accept then you be known as Holy Knight but will receive the title 'Innocence Knight.'

You have received an invitation from Holy Knight Ronian to become an Innocence Knight.

If you accept Ronian's offer then you will lose your previous profession and become an Innocence Knight. Innocence Knight is a women only profession in the Holy Knight series. An Innocence Knight has the same characteristics as a Holy Knight. However, the attack and defense applied to weapons and armour is weak. Instead, a lot more bonuses from Holy magic will be applied.

If you accept, your current profession 'Magician' will be automatically cancelled and all your skills and characteristics will be reset except for level and stats. Instead, Ronian's special abilities will be added. 50% of your current skill points will be returned. You can invest the returned skill points in any skill to raise it.

Would you like to accept?

Lariette hesitated as she looked at the information window before nodding.

".....I'll change my profession."

-It will be done!

Ronian scattered like a mist and merged with Lariette's body.

"Ugh.....this guy.....how dare he.....death.....!"

At that time, Tamura was finally able to move and rushed towards them. Lariette quickly looked through her skills list before instantly casting Holy magic.

“Pure Shield!”

A shield made of light formed in front of them. Boom. A violent impact shook the room. Of course, the hastily cast shield of light could not completely stop Tamura’s attack. But the amazing thing was Tamura’s reaction. Tamura received damage from the attack and wobbled.

‘Yes, his weak point is Holy magic!’

He had no interest in what went on between Ronian and Lariette. The important thing was that Lariette could now damage Tamura.

“Lariette-nim, can you add Holy magic to my sword?”

“Ha, I think I can.”

Lariette looked through her skills list again. And she used her points to raise ‘Pure Sword’ to intermediate before walking towards Ark.

The Holy attribute has been applied to Gwisal’s sword using Pure Sword.

<Damage +15%, it will invalidate the protective dark attribute shield and additional damage +15%>

“Okay, Demonic Opening!”

Ark used Demonic Opening and struck Tamura.

Pepepepeng!

There was a crack in the black slime and Tamura stumbled. So far, no matter how much he stabbed, Tamura would not shed even one drop of blood or lose any health.

‘It works!’

Ark’s eyes brightened. Meanwhile, Lariette eagerly read through her skills and invested some points to make them intermediate.

“Pure Soul, Warrior’s Strength!”

Pure Shield was able to reflect any attacks with the dark attribute! Pure Soul raised the defense against dark attribute attacks by 30%! Warrior’s Strength increased

health by 20%! The Innocence Knight could also overlap buffs 3 times like a Holy Knight. Lariette raised those skills to intermediate and continuously stacked them on Ark. Thankfully, he could now overcome Tamura's demonic attribute. So after the battle continued for several minutes, the crack in the black slime widened further. Then a red light blinked from inside. Eyes of the Cat had found Tamura's underbelly. Ark instinctively realized what the symbol giving off the murderous intent was.

"Blessing of the sea!"

Adelaine's Necklace increased his defense and mana.

'Radun, Myutal's Rapier!"

Ssak ssak ssak!

Ark grasped Myutal's Rapier and made it crack with Blade Storm. There was a violent ringing sound as the sword cracked.

"Take this, Blade Storm!"

Kwa kwa kwa kwang!

He shoved Myutal's Rapier into the black aura just before it exploded. Then the black slime swelled up like a balloon. After a while, the black slime fell off Tamura's body. When Tamura's appearance was revealed, he looked like a skeleton with only bones left behind. Ark immediately drew Gwisal's sword and attacked. When Drastic Measures was used, the head was cut off and fell to the ground.

-Your level has risen.
-Your level has risen.
-Your level has risen.....

Message windows continuously popped up. He quickly rose 9 levels! It was thanks to the bonus experience applied from Drastic Measures.

"This, unbelievable.....darkness.....the power of the Lord of Darkness....."

Tamura's head muttered as he died.

"The power to resurrect.....when I obtain absolute power.....I will destroy the world with the power of the great darkness.....he, he.....he said.....it was a lie....."

'He?'

Ark was puzzled by the words. Then black beads emerged from Tamura's mouth and rose towards the sky. Ark flinched and went to grab his sword bag.....

Biiiiik-!

A black eagle flew down from the sky with a sharp sound. And it grabbed the beads before soaring into the sky again. It happened so quickly that there was no time to react.

"What, what the? That eagle?"

While the eagle soared to the top of the Abyss of Despair, Ark was able to spot one man at the top. The man was standing obscured by the moon. Although he couldn't confirm any details of his shape, the red hair and white mask was unusually visible.

'It can't be.....the Red Man!'

The Red man that appeared in Yggdrasil's video!

'Then Tamura was referring to the Red Man before? If so.....the Red Man was even behind this situation? Then that bead must be a clue!'

Ark was about to jump up with he suddenly stopped.

'Damn, there are items still here.....!'

There were items from the 200 Nakujuk scattered around the underground. In addition, he still hadn't checked the items Tamura dropped! He couldn't give up everything just to chase the Red Man. And even if he ran now, there was no way to catch up. The Red Man muttered something when the eagle approached before grasping a claw and flying into the sky. And he soon disappeared into the darkness. Even Dedric wouldn't be able to catch up with that speed! Ark and Lariette just stared with their mouths open. How much time had passed? Suddenly Lariette raised her head and embraced Ark.

"Kyaaa, we won! We defeated Tamura!"

At the same time, his thoughts about the Red Man flew towards Andromeda.

"La-Lariette-nim?"

When Ark spoke, Lariette blushed and moved her arms.

"I-I'm sorry. I was so excited....."

"Ah, no. You can hold on....."

"Huh?"

"No."

Ark closed his mouth and shook his head. There was an awkward silence between the two of them. After a while.....Lariette looked at Ark before saying.

"I.....I finished all my work here. But I don't know how to return to our original world. After I entered, the gate disappeared."

Ark seemed to have been expecting something else and replied with a disappointed face.

"I also haven't found a way to return yet. The gate I entered was one-way. I'm sorry I can't help."

"No, it's not that.....can I stay with Ark until you find the gate?"

"Yes?"

Ark stared at Lariette with wide eyes. Continuing with Lariette. It was what he had been hoping for since the start of the game. In addition, he saw the value of having Lariette along after fighting this boss. But the idea of sharing items weighed heavily on his mind. A crush was a crush, but didn't reality also matter? It was necessary to make the part clear. It would be a problem if he lost half of his income because of a crush.

"I'd love to have you help me. But before that, the items....."

"I just want to accompany you for a while. I don't care about anything else."

Lariette had been accompanied by Alan from the beginning of the game and didn't know the pain of starvation. So she didn't really need items. Or maybe she thought Ark would give her any items with her specifications? If she thought so then she was wrong. Although he would concede japtem to some extent, he wouldn't even concede valuable items to JusticeMan.

'Yes, she's changed her profession from a magician to a knight. She's been wearing magician equipment until now so I'll give her some knight items from the japtem."

Anyway, now there was no reason to refuse Lariette's request.

"I understand. I accept."

"Thank you. Then I'll be organizing my skills for a while. Since my skills have changed, I need to perform some maintenance."

Ark nodded and Lariette went up to where Bona was waiting. Ark felt something strange because of her attitude but shook his head.

'She's probably relieved not to be wandering the Netherworld alone.'

But now wasn't the time to be concerned about her inner thoughts.

'Tamura's items!'

The rewards after so much suffering!

"Okay, Radun. Look around and swallow the japtem."

Ssak ssak ssak!

Ark released Radun and approached Tamura.

Necromancer's Essence

The essence of a Necromancer who inhabited the Abyss of Despair.

*The information regarding the monster's essence has been grasped using the excellent intuition of an advanced Survival Cooking chef.

This essence belongs to Tamura, a Necromancer of the Nakujuk clan who ruled the Abyss of Despair. The culmination of his power resides in this crystal that contains a mysterious knowledge. After completing the immortality pill, you will be able to acquire some of the knowledge.

<Monster Essence Rating: A>

"Huk, an A rank essence.....!"

Ark felt breathless as his jaw dropped. This was the second time he found an essence in the Netherworld. And this time it was an A rank essence! As an A rank essence, it should have a stronger effect than Slime's Immortality Pill. The bonus would be unimaginable.

'Is this the effect of Drastic Measures? Or do essences have a higher probability of dropping in the Netherworld?'

Well, it doesn't matter why it appeared. Ark made himself calm down and confirmed the next item.

Death Engraved Stick (Unique)

Weapon type: Staff

Attack: 35~40

Durability: 55/90

Weight: 40

User restriction: Level 200 or more Necromancer

The Necromancer Tamura's staff. An evil artifact made by extracting the bones from a large number of bodies. Powerful death magic is imbued in this weapon.

<Option: Mental Power +30, Intelligence +20, Health +200, Necromancer's skills +10%>]

<Special Option: The Necromancer only skill 'Power of Death' is applied. 'Power of Death' gives a bonus 30% to the stats of all summoned undead creatures>

Ark's eyes widened after he saw the item. It was also an amazing item. Most rare items had a skill attached as an option, but it was hardly ever a passive option. The effect increased the abilities of the summons by 30%! Plus there was the general passive option of increasing all necromancer's skills by 10%. It was an item that every necromancer would want to get their hands on.

Since it took a lot for necromancers to summon, they would offer a lot of money to buy this item. Any user who raised their character over level 200 would have the kind of money to buy this item for an expensive price!

The Netherworld was an unexplored area where only 10 people have come. Most of the monsters and bosses killed by Ark would've died for the first time. Therefore, the probability of monsters dropping their best items was quite high. With the use of Drastic Measures, the Netherworld had become a gold mine for Ark.

Clack clack clack, clack clack clack!

Then, he heard Deimos approach the place where Tamura's head fell. Ark became shocked when he turned around and saw what was happening. A horrific scene was unfolding in front of Ark. Deimos had been ripping the flesh off Tamura's

head. Deimos had revealed a skull in an instant and cradled it with a warm look on his face. Then he placed Tamura's skull with the rest of his skeleton. A blue flame appeared in the eyes while red sparks started spreading on the new skeleton.

'W-what is going on? Oh my god.....Is this the reason Deimos didn't want us to attack Tamura's head.....?'

He coveted Tamura's skull? Although he knew Deimos had a 'bone collecting' hobby, but to even change his head? It was a bizarre sight. But Ark hadn't assessed the situation correctly. Deimos intention wasn't simply to change the bones.

The new skeleton merged with Deimos as he was engulfed in a red glow. A message window immediately appeared next to Ark.

TO BE CONTINUED

[End of Book 09]